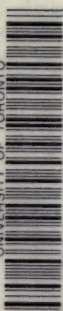


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A CALL

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE FIFTH QUEEN

PRIVY SEAL

THE FIFTH QUEEN CROWNED

THE SOUL OF LONDON

THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY

THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE

THE HALF-MOON

MR. APOLLO

THE ENGLISH GIRL

A CALL

THE TALE OF TWO PASSIONS

BY

FORD MADOX HUEFFER

"We have a flower in our garden,
We call it Marygold :
And if you will not when you may,
You shall not when you wold."

Folk-Songs from Somerset

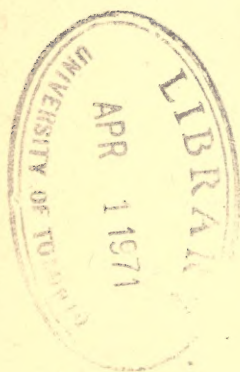


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PART I



A CALL

I

IT was once said of Mr. Robert Grimshaw : “That chap is like a seal”—and the simile was a singularly just one. He was like a seal who is thrusting his head and shoulders out of the water, and, with large, dark eyes and sensitive nostrils, is on the watch. All that could be known of him seemed to be known ; all that could be known of the rest of the world he moved in he seemed to know. He carried about with him usually, in a crook of his arm, a polished, light brown dachshund that had very large feet, and eyes as large, as brown, and as luminous, as those of his master. Upon the occasion of Pauline Lucas’s marriage to Dudley Leicester the dog was not upon his arm, but he carried it into the drawing-rooms of the many ladies who welcomed him to

afternoon tea. Apparently it had no attractions save its clear and beautiful colour, its excellent if very grotesque shape, and its complete docility. He called upon a lady at tea-time, and, with the same motion that let him down into his chair, he would set the dog upon the floor between his legs. There it would remain, as motionless and as erect as a fire-dog, until it was offered a piece of buttered tea-cake, which it would accept, or until its master gave it a minute and hardly audible permission to rove about. Then it would rove. The grotesque, large-little feet paddled set wide upon the carpet, the long ears flapped to the ground. But, above all, the pointed and sensitive nose would investigate with a minute attention, but with an infinite gentleness, every object within its reach in the room, from the line of the skirting-board to the legs of the piano and the flounced skirts of the ladies sitting near the tea-tables. Robert Grimshaw would observe these investigations with an indulgent approval ; and, indeed, someone else once said—and perhaps with more justness—that Mr. Grimshaw resembled most nearly his own dog Peter.

But upon the occasion of Pauline Lucas's marriage to Dudley Leicester, in the rustle of laces, the brushing sound of feet upon the cocoa-nut matting, to the strains of the organ, and the "honk" of automobiles that, arriving, set down perpetually new arrivals, the dog Peter pursued no investigations. Neither, indeed, did Mr. Grimshaw, for he was upon ground absolutely familiar. He was heard to be asked and to answer: "Where *did* Cora Strangeways get her dresses made?" with the words: "Oh, she gets them at Madame Serafine's, in Sloane Street. I waited outside once in her brougham for nearly two hours."

And to ladies who asked for information as to the bride's antecedents, he would answer patiently and gently (it was at the very beginning of the winter season, and there were present a great many people "back from" all sorts of places—from the Rhine to Caracas)——

"Oh, Pauline's folk are the very best sort of people in the world. Her mother was army, her father navy—well, you all know the Lucases of Laughton, or you ought to. Yes, it's quite true what you've heard, Mrs. Tresillian; Pauline was a nursery governess.

What do you make of it? Her father *would* go a mucker in South American water-works because he'd passed a great deal of his life on South American stations and thought he knew the country. So he joined the other Holy Innocents—the ones with wings—and Pauline had to go as a nursery governess till her mother's people compounded with her father's creditors."

And to Hartley Jenx's croaking remark that Dudley Leicester might have done himself better, Grimshaw, with his eyes upon the bride, raised and hardened his voice to say :

"Nobody in the world could have done better, my good man. If it hadn't been Dudley, it would have been me. You're come to the wrong shop. *I* know what I'm talking about. I haven't been carting Yankees around ruins ; I've been in the centre of things."

Hartley Jenx, who estimated Dudley Leicester at five thousand a year and several directorates, estimated Grimshaw at a little over ten, plus what he must have saved in the six years since he had come into the Spartalide money. For it was obvious that Grimshaw, who lived in rooms off Cadogan Square and

had only the smallest of bachelor shoots—that Grimshaw couldn't spend anything like his income. And amongst the guests at the subsequent reception, Hartley Jenx—who made a living by showing Americans round the country in summer, and by managing a charitable steam-laundry in the winter—with croaking voice, might at intervals be heard exclaiming :

“ My *dear* Mrs. Van Notten, my dear Miss Schuykill, we don't estimate a girl's fortune here by what she's got, but by what she's refused.” And to the accentuated “ My's !” of the two ladies from Poughkeepsie he added, with a singular gravity :

“ The bride of the day has refused sixty thousand dollars ayear !”

So that, although the illustrated papers lavishly reproduced Pauline's pink-and-white beauty, stated that her father was the late Commodore Lucas, and her mother a daughter of Quarternion Castlemaine, and omitted the fact that she had refused twelve thousand a year to marry seven and a few directorates, there were very few of those whom Grimshaw

desired to have the knowledge that did not know this his tragedy.

On the steps of the church, Robert Grimshaw was greeted by his cousin, Ellida Langham, whose heavily patterned black veil, drooping hat of black fur, and long coat all black with the wide black sleeves, enhanced the darkness of her coal-black eyes, the cherry colour of her cheeks, and the rich red of her large lips. Holding out her black-gloved hand with an odd little gesture, as if at the same time she were withdrawing it, she uttered the words :

“Have you heard anything of Katya?” Her head seemed to be drawn back, birdlike, into the thick furs on her neck, and her voice had in it a plaintive quality. Being one of two daughters of the late Peter Lascarides, and the wife of Paul Langham, she was accounted fortunate as owning great possessions, a very attached husband, and sound health. The plaintive tone in her voice was set down to the fact that her little daughter of six was said to be mentally afflicted, and her sister Katya to have behaved in the strangest possible manner. Indeed, Mr. Hartley Jenx was accustomed to assure his American friends that Katya Las-

carides had been sent abroad under restraint, though her friends gave it out that she was in Philadelphia working at a nerve-cure place.

"She is still in Philadelphia," Robert Grimshaw answered, "but I haven't heard from her."

Ellida Langham shivered a little in her furs.

"These November weddings always make me think of Katya and you," she said; "it was to have been done for you in November, too. I don't think you have forgotten."

"I'm going to walk in the Park for ten minutes," Grimshaw replied. "Peter's in the shop. Come too."

She hooked herself on to his arm to be conducted to her coupé at the end of a strip of red carpet, and in less than two minutes they were dropped on the pavement beside the little cigar-shop that is set, as it were, into the railings of the Park. Here Peter the dachshund, sitting patiently on the spot where his master had left him, beside the doormat, greeted Robert Grimshaw with one tiny whimper and a bow of joy; and then, his nose a hair's-breadth from Robert Grimshaw's heel, he paddled after them into the Park.

It was very grey, leafless, and deserted.

The long rows of chairs stretched out untenanted, and the long perspective of the soft-going Ladies' Mile had no single rider. They walked very slowly, and spoke in low tones.

"I almost wish," Ellida Langham said, "that you had taken Katya's offer. What could have been said worse of her than they say now?"

"What do you say of her as it is?" Robert Grimshaw answered.

Mrs. Langham drooped in discouragement.

"That she is engaged in good works. But in Philadelphia! Who believes in good works in Philadelphia? Besides, she's acting as a nurse—for payment. That isn't good works, and it's disagreeable to lie even about one's sister."

"Whatever Katya did," Robert Grimshaw answered seriously, "she would be engaged in good works. You might pay her a king's salary, and she'd still do more than she was paid for. That's what it is to do good works."

"But if you had taken her on her own terms . . ."—Mrs. Langham seemed as if she were pleading with him—"don't you think that one day she or you will give in?"

"I think she never will, and she may be right," he answered. "I think I never shall, and I know I am."

"But if no one ever knew," she said "wouldn't it be the same thing as the other thing?"

"Ellida, dear," he answered gravely, "wouldn't *that* mean a great deal more lying for you—about your sister?"

"But wouldn't it be much better worth lying about?" she appealed to him. "You are such a dear, she's such a dear, and I could cry; I want you to come together so much!"

"I don't think I shall ever give in," he answered. And then, seeing a real moisture of tears in the eyes that were turned towards him, he said:

"I might, but not till I grow much more tired—oh, *much* more tired!—than I am."

And then he added, as briskly as he could, for he spoke habitually in low tones, "I am coming in to supper to-night, tell Paul. How's Kitty?"

They were turning across the soft going, down towards where Mrs. Langham's motor

was waiting for her beside the door of the French Embassy.

"Oh, Doctor Tressider says there's nothing to be fundamentally anxious about. He says that there are many children of six who are healthy enough and can't speak. I don't exactly know how to put it, but he says—well, you might call it a form of obstinacy."

Robert Grimshaw said "Ah!"

"Oh, I know you think," his cousin commented, "that that runs in the family. At any rate, there's Kitty as lively as a lark and perfectly sound physically, and she won't speak."

"And there's Katya," Mr. Grimshaw said, "as lively as a thoroughbred, and as sound as a roach, and a great deal better than any angel—and she won't marry."

Again Mrs. Langham was silent for a moment or two, then she added:

"There was mother, too. I suppose that was a form of obstinacy. You remember she always *used* to say that she would imitate poor mother to the death. Why—mother used to dress ten years before her age so that Katya should not look like a lady of fifty. What a couple of angels they were, weren't they?"

“You haven’t heard”—Mr. Grimshaw continued his musings—“you haven’t heard from your mother’s people that there *was* any obstacle?”

“None in the world,” she answered. “There couldn’t have been. We’ve made all the inquiries that were possible. Why, my father’s private bank-books for years and years back exist to this day, and there’s no payment in them that can’t be traced. There would have been mysterious cheques if there were anything of the sort, but there’s nothing, nothing. And mother—well, you know the Greek system of dealing with girls—she was shut up in a harem till she—till she came out here to father. No, it’s inexplicable.”

“Well, if Kitty’s obstinate *not* to imitate people,” Grimshaw commented, “you can only say that Katya’s obstinacy takes the form of imitation.”

Mrs. Langham gave vent to a little sort of wail.

“You aren’t going back on Katya?” she said. “It isn’t true, is it, that there’s another?”

“I don’t know whether it’s true or not true,” Grimshaw said, “but you can take it that to-

day's ceremony has hit me a little hard. Katya is always first, but think of that dear little woman tied to the sort of obtuse hypochondriac that Dudley Leicester is!"

"Oh, but there's nothing *in* Pauline Lucas," Mrs. Langham objected, "and I shouldn't say Dudley was a hypochondriac. He looks the picture of health."

"Ah, you don't know Dudley Leicester as I do," Grimshaw said. "I've been his best friend for years."

"I know you've been very good to him," Ellida Langham answered.

"I know I have," Grimshaw replied, as nearly as possible grimly. "And haven't I now given him what was dearest and best to me?"

"But Katya?" Mrs. Langham said.

"One wants Katya," Grimshaw said—"one wants Katya. She is vigour, she is life, she is action, she is companionship. One wants her, if you like, because she is chivalry itself, and so she's obstinate; but, if one can't have Katya, one wants. . . ."

He paused and looked at the dachshund that, when he paused, paused and looked back at him.

"That's what one wants," he continued. "One wants tenderness, fidelity, pretty grace, quaintness, and, above all, worship. Katya could give me companionship; but wouldn't Pauline have given me worship?"

"But still . . ." Mrs. Langham commenced.

"Oh, I know," Grimshaw interrupted, "there's nothing *in* her, but still. . . ."

"But still," Mrs. Langham mocked him, "dear old Toto, you *do* want to talk about her. Let's take another little turn; I can give you five minutes more."

She beckoned to her car to come in at the gates and follow them along the side-walk past the tall barracks in the direction of Kensington.

"Yes, I dearly want to talk about Pauline," Grimshaw said, and his cousin laughed out the words:

"Oh, you strong, silent men! Don't you know you are called a strong, silent man? I remember how you used to talk to Katya and me about all the others before you got engaged to Katya. When I come to think of it, the others were all little doll-things like Pauline Leicester. Katya used to say: 'There's nothing *in* them!' She used to say it in

private to me. It tore her heart to shreds, you know. I couldn't understand how you came to turn from them to her, but I know you did and I know you do. . . .

"You haven't changed a bit, Toto," she began again. "You play at being serious and reserved and mysterious and full of knowledge, but you're still the kiddie in knickerbockers who used to have his pockets full of chocolate creams for the gardener's mite of a daughter. I remember I used to see you watching her skip. You'd stand for minutes at a time and just devour her with your eyes—a little tot of a thing. And then you'd throw her the chocolate creams out of the window. You were twelve and I was nine and Katya was seven and the gardener's daughter was six, but what an odd boy I used to think you!"

"That's precisely it," Grimshaw said. "That's what I want in Pauline. I don't want to touch her. I want to watch her going through the lancers with that little mouth just open, and the little hand just holding out her skirt, and a little, tender expression of joy. Don't you see—just to watch her? She's a small, light bird. I want

to have her in a cage, to chirrup over her, to whistle to her, to give her grapes, and to have her peep up at me and worship me. No, I haven't changed. When I was that boy it didn't occur to me that I could have Katya; we were like brother and sister, so I wanted to watch little Millie Neil. Now I know I might have Katya and I can't, so I want to watch Pauline Leicester. I want to; I want to; I want to."

His tones were perfectly level and tranquil; he used no gesture; his eyes remained upon the sand of the rolled side-walk, but his absolutely monotonous voice expressed a longing so deep, and so deep a hunger that Ellida Langham said:

"Oh, come, cheer up, old Toto; you'll be able to watch her as much as you want. I suppose you will dine with the Leicesters the three times a week that you don't dine with us, and have tea with Pauline every day, won't you?"

"But they're going out of England for a month," Grimshaw said, "and I'm due to start for Athens the day before they come back."

"Oh, poor boy!" Ellida commiserated him.

"You won't be able to watch your bird in Leicester's cage for a whole ten weeks. I believe you'd like to cry over her."

"I should like to cry over her," Robert Grimshaw said, with perfect gravity. "I should like to kneel down and put my face in her lap and cry, and cry, and cry."

"As you used to do with me years ago," she said.

"As I used to do with you," he answered.

"Poor—old—Tot," she said very slowly, and he kissed her on her veil over her cheek, whilst he handed her into her coupé. She waved her black-gloved fingers at him out of the passing window, and, his hands behind his back, his shoulders square and his face serious, tranquil, and expressing no emotion, he slowly continued his stroll towards the Albert Memorial. He paused, indeed, to watch four sparrows hopping delicately on their mysterious errands, their heads erect, through the grimy and long grass between the Park railings and the path. It appeared to him that they were going ironically through a set of lancers, and the smallest of them, a paler coloured hen, might have been Pauline Leicester.

II

THAT was not, however, to be the final colloquy between Robert Grimshaw and Ellida Langham, for he was again upon her doorstep just before her time to pour out tea.

“What is the matter?” she asked; “you know you *aren’t* looking well, Toto.”

Robert Grimshaw was a man of thirty-five, who, by reason that he allowed himself the single eccentricity of a very black, short beard, might have passed for fifty. His black hair grew so far back upon his brow that he had an air of incipient baldness; his nose was very aquiline and very sharply modelled at the tip, and when, at a Christmas party, to amuse his little niece, he had put on a red stocking-cap, many of the children had been frightened of him, so much did he resemble a Levantine pirate. His manners, however, were singularly unnoticeable; he spoke in habitually low

tones ; no one exactly knew the extent of his resources, but he was reputed rather "close," because he severely limited his expenditure. He commanded a cook, a parlourmaid, a knife-boy, and a man called Jervis, who was the husband of his cook, and he kept them upon board wages. His habits were of an extreme regularity, and he had never been known to raise his voice. He was rather an adept with the fencing-sword, and save for his engagement to Katya Lascarides and its rupture he had had no appreciable history. And, indeed, Katya Lascarides was by now so nearly forgotten in Mayfair that he was beginning to pass for a confirmed bachelor. His conduct with regard to Pauline Lucas, whom everybody had expected him to marry, was taken by most of his friends to indicate that he had achieved that habit of mind that causes a man to shrink from the disturbance that a woman would cause to his course of life. Himself the son of an English banker and of a lady called Lascarides, he had lost both his parents before he was three years old, and he had been brought up by his uncle and aunt, the Peter Lascarides, and in the daily society of his

cousins, Katya and Ellida. Comparatively late—perhaps because as Ellida said, he had always regarded his cousins as his sisters—he had become engaged to his cousin Katya, very much to the satisfaction of his uncle and his aunt. But Mrs. Lascarides having died shortly before the marriage was to have taken place, it was put off, and the death of Mr. Lascarides, occurring four months later, and with extreme suddenness, the match was broken off, for no reason that anyone knew altogether. Mr. Lascarides had, it was known, died intestate, and apparently, according to Greek law, Robert Grimshaw had become his uncle's sole heir. But he was understood to have acted exceedingly handsomely by his cousins. Indeed, it was a fact Mr. Hartley Jenx had definitely ascertained, that upon the marriage of Ellida to Paul Langham, Robert Grimshaw had executed in her benefit settlements of a sum that must have amounted to very nearly half his uncle's great fortune. Her sister Katya, who had been attached to her mother with a devotion that her English friends considered to be positively hysterical, had, it was pretty clearly understood, become exceedingly

strange in her manner after her mother's death. The reason for her rupture with Robert Grimshaw was not very clearly understood, but it was generally thought to be due to religious differences. Mrs. Lascarides had been exceedingly attached to the Greek Orthodox Church, whereas, upon going to Winchester, Robert Grimshaw, for the sake of convenience and with the consent of his uncle, had been received into the Church of England. But whatever the causes of the rupture, there was no doubt that it was an occasion of great bitterness. Katya Lascarides certainly suffered from a species of nervous breakdown, and passed some months in a hydropathic establishment on the Continent; and it was afterwards known by those who took the trouble to be at all accurate in their gossip that she had passed over to Philadelphia in order to study the more obscure forms of nervous diseases. In this study she was understood to have gained a very great proficiency, for Mrs. Clement P. Van Husum, junior, whose balloon-parties were such a feature of at least one London season, and who herself had been one of Miss Lascarides' patients, was accustomed to say with all the

enthusiastic emphasis of her country and race—she had been before marriage a Miss Car-teighe of Hoboken, N.Y.—that not only had Katya Lascarides saved her life and reason, but that the chief of the Philadelphian Institute was accustomed always to send Katya to diagnose obscure cases in the more remote parts of the American continent. It was, as the few friends that Katya had remaining in London said, a little out of the picture—at any rate, of the picture of the slim, dark and passionate girl with the extreme, pale beauty and the dark eyes that they remembered her to have had.

But there was no knowing what religion might not have done for this southern nature if, indeed, religion was the motive of the rupture with Robert Grimshaw; and she was known to have refused to receive from her cousin any of her father's money, so that that, too, had some of the aspect of her having become a nun, or, at any rate, of her having adopted a cloisteral frame of mind, devoting herself, as her sister Ellida said, "to good works." But whatever the cause of the quarrel, there had been no doubt that Robert

Grimshaw had felt the blow very severely—as severely as it was possible for such things to be felt in the restrained atmosphere of the more southerly and western portions of London. He had disappeared, indeed, for a time, though it was understood that he had been spending several months in Athens arranging his uncle's affairs and attending to those of the firm of Peter Lascarides and Company, of which firm he had become a director. And even when he returned to London it was to be observed that he was still very “hipped.” What was at all times most noticeable about him, to those who observed these things, was the pallor of his complexion. When he was in health, this extreme and delicate whiteness had a subcutaneous flush like the intangible colouring of a China rose. But upon his return from Athens it had, and it retained for some time, the peculiar and chalky opacity. Shortly after his return he engrossed himself in the affairs of his friend Dudley Leicester, who had lately come into very large but very involved estates. Dudley Leicester, who, whatever he had, had no head for business,

had been Robert Grimshaw's fag at school, and had been his almost daily companion at Oxford and ever since. But little by little the normal flush had returned to Robert Grimshaw's face ; only whilst lounging through life he appeared to become more occupied in his mind, more reserved, more benevolent and more gentle.

It was on observing a return of the excessive and chalk-like opacity in Robert Grimshaw's cheeks that Ellida, when that afternoon he called upon her, exclaimed :

"What's the matter ? You know you aren't looking well. One would think Peter was dead."

"You've got," he said, "to put on your things and come and see them off at the station."

"I ?" she protested. "What are they to me ?"

He passed his hand over his forehead.

"I've got to go," he said. "I don't want to, but I've got to. I've got to see the last of Pauline."

Ellida said : "*Oh !*"

"It's not," he answered, "a question of what you are to them, but of what I am to you. You're the only sister I've got in the world."

Ellida was walking up to him to put her hands upon his shoulders.

"Yes, dear," she was beginning, with the note of tenderness in her voice.

"And," he interrupted her, "you're the only sister that Katya's got in the world. If I've arranged this marriage it's for your sake, to keep myself for Katya."

She gave a little indrawing of the breath :

"Oh, Toto dear," she said painfully, "is it as bad as that?"

"It's as bad as that—it's worse," he answered.

"Then don't go," she pleaded. "Stop away. What's the use of it?"

"I can't," he said numbly. "It's no use, but I can't stop away;" and he added in a fierce whisper: "Get your things on quickly; there's not much time. I can't answer for what will happen if you're not there to safeguard Katya's interests."

She shivered a little back from him.

"Oh, Toto," she said, "it's not that I'm thinking of. It's you, if you're in such pain."

“Be quick ! be quick !” he insisted.

Whilst she was putting on her furs she sent in to the room the small, dark, laughing and dumb Kitty. With steps of swift delight, with an air at once jolly and elfin, the small, dark child in her white dress ran to catch hold of the lappets of her uncle's coat, but for the first time in his life Robert Grimshaw gazed out unseeing over his niece's head. He brushed her to one side and began to walk feverishly down the room, his white teeth gleaming with an air of fierceness through the bluish-black of his beard and moustache. But even with their haste, it was only by almost running along the platform beside the train that Ellida was able in the dusk to shake the hands of Dudley Leicester and his wife. Grimshaw himself stood behind her, his own hands behind his back. And Ellida had a vision, as slowly the train moved, of a little, death-white, childish face, of a pair of blue eyes, that gazed as if from the face of Death himself, over her shoulder. And then, whilst she fumbled with the flowers in her breast, Pauline Leicester suddenly sank down, her head falling back amongst the cushions, and at the last motion

of her hand she dropped on to the platform the small bunch of violets. Ellida leaned forward with a quick and instinctive gesture of rescue.

"She's fainted!" she exclaimed. "Oh, *poor* child!"

The train glided slowly and remorselessly from the platform, and for a long time Robert Grimshaw watched it dwindling out of the shadow of the high station into the shadows of the falling November dusk, until they were all alone on the platform. And suddenly Robert Grimshaw ground the little bunch of flowers beneath his heel vindictively, his teeth showing as they bit his lower lip.

"*Toto!*" Ellida exclaimed in a tone of sharp terror and anguish, "why did she throw them to you? She shouldn't have. But why do you do that?"

His voice came harshly from his throat.

"They were my flowers—my gift. She was throwing them away. Hadn't you the sense to see that?" and his voice was cruel.

She recoiled minutely, but at his next action she came swiftly forward, her hands outstretched as if to stop him. He had picked

up the violets, his lips moving silently. He touched with them each of his wrists, each of his eyes, his lips and his heart.

“Oh, don’t,” she said. “You aren’t serious—you can’t be serious!” for, as it seemed to her, semi-ironically her cousin was going through a Greek incantation that they had been told of by their old Greek nurse. “You can’t *want* to retain that poor little thing’s affections.”

“Serious!” Robert Grimshaw muttered.

“Oh, Robert,” she said, “what have you done it for? If she’s so frightfully in love with you, and you’re so frightfully in love with her . . . and you’ve only got to look at her face to see. I never saw such misery. Isn’t it horrible to think of them steaming away together?”

Robert Grimshaw clenched his teeth firmly. “What did I do it for?” he said.

His eyes wandered over the form of a lady who passed them in earnest conversation with a porter. “That woman’s going to drop her purse out of her muff,” he said; and then he added sharply: “I didn’t know what it would mean; no, I didn’t know what it would mean.

It's the sort of thing that's done every day, but it's horrible."

"It's horrible," Ellida repeated. "You oughtn't to have done it. It's true I stand for Katya, but if you wanted that child so much and she wanted you so dreadfully, wasn't it your business to have made her happy, and yourself? If I'd known, *I* shouldn't have stood in the way, not even for Katya's sake. She's no claim—none that can be set against a feeling like that. She's gone away; she's shown no sign."

She stopped, and then she uttered suddenly :

"Oh, Robert, you oughtn't to have done it; no good can come of it."

He turned upon her sharply.

"Upon my word," he said, "you talk like an old-fashioned shopkeeper's wife. Nothing but harm can come of it! What have we arrived at in our day and our class if we haven't learnt to do what we want, to do what seems proper and expedient—and to take what we get for it?"

They turned and went slowly up the long platform.

"Oh, our day and our class," Ellida said

slowly. "It would be better for Pauline to be the old-fashioned wife of a small shop-keeper than what she is—if she cared for him."

They were nearly at the barrier, and he said:

"Oh sentimentality, sentimentality! I had to do what seemed best for, us all—that was what I wanted. Now I'm taking what I get for it."

And he relapsed into a silence that lasted until they were nearly at home. And seated beside him in her coupé, Ellida, with the little deep wisdom of the woman of the household, sat beside him in a mood of wonder, of tenderness, and of commiseration.

"And it's always like this," she seemed to feel in her wise, small bones. "There they are, these men of ours. We see them altogether affable, smiling, gentle, composed. And we women have to make believe to their faces and to each other that they're towers of strength and all-wise, as they like to make out that they are. We see them taking action that they think is strong; and forcible, and masculine, and that we know is utterly mad;

and we have to pretend to them and to each other that we agree in placid confidence; and then we go home, each one of us with our husbands or our brothers, and the strong masculine creature breaks down, groans and drags us after him hither and thither in his crisis, when he has to pay for his folly. And that's life. And that's love. And that's the woman's part. And that's all there is to it."

It is not to be imagined that Ellida did anything so unsubtle as to put these feelings of hers, even to herself, into words. They found vent only in the way her eyes, compassionate and maternal, rested on his brooding face. Indeed, the only words she uttered, either to herself or to him, were, with deep concern—he had taken off his hat to ease the pressure of the blood in his brows—as she ran her fingers gently through his hair:

"Poor old Toto!"

He remained lost in his abstraction, until they were almost at her door. Then he squared his shoulders and resumed his hat.

"Yet I'm sure I was right," he said. "Just consider what it was up to me to do. You've

got to think that I don't by any means care for Katya less. I want her for myself. But I want to see to it that Pauline has a good time, and I want to see her having it."

"How can she have it if you've given her Dudley Leicester when she wants you?"

"My dear child," he answered, and he had become again calm, strong, and infinitely lofty. "Don't you understand that's how Society has to go on? It's the sort of thing that's got to happen to make us the civilized people that we are. Dudley's the best fellow in the world: I'm sure he's the best fellow in the world. I know everything he's ever done and every thought he's ever thought for the last twenty years, and everything that Pauline wants to do in this world he'll do. She'll make a man of him. She'll give him a career. He'll be her life's work. And if you can't have what you want, the next best thing is to have a life's work that's worth doing, that's engrossing, that keeps you from thinking about what you haven't got."

Ellida refrained from saying that what a different thing it was, and with his air of tranquil wisdom he went on:

“ We’re all—all of us, in our class and our day, doing the same thing. Every one of us really wants the moon, and we’ve got somehow to get on with just the earth, and behave ourselves. I suppose what I really want is both Katya and Pauline. That sort of thing is probably in our blood—yours and mine—and no doubt in the great days of our race I should have had both of them, but I’ve got to sacrifice physical possession of one of them to the amenities of a civilization that’s pleasant enough, and that’s taken thousands of years to bring together. We’re the children of the age and of all the ages, and if at times it’s painful, we’ve got to get over the pain somehow. This is done with. You won’t see me wince again, not ever. It’s my business in life just to wait for Katya, and to see that Pauline has a good time.”

Ellida did not say: “ You mean, in fact, to keep as much as you want of both of them ?” She said instead: “ What’s wanted is that Katya should come back from Philadelphia to look after you. You need to be looked after by a woman, and I’m going to get her.”

"Oh yes, I need to be looked after," he said. And he added :

"But you know, dear, you do it splendidly."

She nodded in the very least.

"Yes," she said, "but you need to be looked after by at least two of us, and to have the whole time of at least one. I've got Paul and I've got Kitty as well as you." She added to herself: "Katya will be able to manage you with my hints. I don't believe she could without, if she is anything like the passionate darling she used to be." And she concluded out loud: "It's Kitty that's going to bring her back from Philadelphia. I've had my trump card up my sleeve for some time, but I haven't wanted to interfere in matters with two such volcanoes as you and she really are. It seemed too much of a responsibility. And I've sort of felt that a little person like Pauline was the person who ought to have *married* you. I know it now. You ought to have married Pauline and given her a good time. Then you could have gone on waiting for Katya till the end of the chapter."

Robert Grimshaw said "Oh !"

"But you're in," she shut him up, "such a

hopeless pickle as it is that I don't believe even Katya, darling as she is, could make you any worse. So that if she comes back you'd better just take her on her own terms, and make the very best of it."

III

PAULINE LEICESTER'S mother's cottage had only one spare bedroom. It stood in the New Forest, some seven miles from Brockenhurst, with no house nearer it than just that seven miles. And Mrs. Lucas, the mother of Pauline Leicester, suffered from angina pectoris. She was a little, pleasant woman, with the greatest tact that was ever known; she played a variety of Patiences, and she had one very attached servant. But, little and pleasant and patient and tactful, she suffered very much pain.

It was not, indeed, angina pectoris, but pneumonia that brought the Leicesters down in March.

"And, poor dear!" Pauline said to her husband, "no one knows what she has borne. And now . . ."

She was sitting alone opposite Leicester in

the railway carriage ; she was still in furs, for March was by no means done with, and the black, grey-tipped hairs encircling her porcelain cheeks and chin, the black, grey-tipped furs crowning her brow, that was like soft and translucent china, she leaned back in the seat, and was so tiny that her feet did not touch the floor. Her brows curved out over her eyes ; their lashes curved out and upwards, so that she had an expression of being a newly awakened and wondering child, and about her lips there hovered always one of those faint ghosts of smiles that are to other smiles as the faint odour of pot-pourri is to the scent of roses. Her husband called her Puff-Ball, because he said a breath of wind would scatter her like an odorous smoke, gone in a second ; but she had acquired her faint smile whilst tending five very robust children when she had been a nursery governess. She was twenty-three.

“ You see,” she went on, “ it was always mother’s ambition—her secret ambition—to have a white pony and a basket-work open chaise. It must be a white pony and a basket-work chaise. You know, the New Forest’s

the place where all Admirals go to die, and all their widows always set up these chaises, just as all the Admirals always have parrots. Not that I ever considered mother as a widow. I suppose that was because I hardly saw her at all in her weeds, and I hardly ever saw her with my father—and yet she was in such an agony of fear whenever the wind blew, or when the weather was fierce. When it blew in the Forest, it used to remind her that there might be wind at sea; when it was a dead calm, she was always convinced that that meant that there was a particularly vicious cyclone somewhere else. She always seemed most characteristic when she was sitting bolt upright, with one hand close to her heart—listening. And I don't think she was the woman for father. He was so big and grizzled; and loud and romantic. He used to shout at her: 'What 'd a puff of wind do to a first-class cruiser? What 'd it do, d'you think?' It wasn't that he wasn't prouder of her than you are of me. Why, I've seen him take her up in his arms and hoist her towards the ceiling, as if she had been a baby, and roar with laughter. But I don't think that was very good for

mother. And you know she got her first touch of heart trouble when the *Victoria* was rammed. She was in Lyndhurst, and read it on the placards—‘*Flagship sunk: Admiral and six hundred lives lost.*’ She put her hand over her heart and fell over backwards. Oh! poor dear!”

Pauline looked at her husband.

“Yes, old boy,” she said, “you don’t know what we women have to suffer.”

He was like a large, pleased spaniel assaulted by a Persian kitten. He was so slow that he seemed never to get a word out; he was so happy that he never made the effort. He had promised to stand for Mid-Kent when they had been married one year, because she declared that he needed an occupation, and would be tired of her prattle. She said she could hold him a year; after that he’d have to go out of the house. And, indeed, she ran on and on, but it was pleasant enough to hear her as she thought aloud, her mind linking up topic to topic.

“Yes,” she said, “there were father’s speculations, that were as bad for her as the winds on the sea. He’d roar out: ‘I never put into

anything in any one year more than three-fifths of my year's screw. I never did, and I never will. And the wheel's bound to turn right side up.' But it never did, and it never would. And he had expensive tastes, and there was me to dress. And I've seen him sitting with his chin between his hands. So that when he died his coffin stood in an empty house—the brokers had cleared it that day. And I was at the Brigstocks'—up in the nursery."

Dudley Leicester swore suddenly at Fate that had so misused his Puff-Ball.

"I've never really told you this," Pauline said, "though I dare say you knew it."

"I never knew it," he said. "By God! I'd like to, . . . Well, the most I knew was, I heard the Brigstocks only gave you three days for your father's funeral, and cut it off your holidays next summer."

"Well, I've got to thank them that I never really think of mother as a widow. I'm glad of that; and there *were* five children in the nursery, and only me to look after them."

Mr. Leicester muttered beneath his breath that they were cursed hogs.

"Well, I've got to thank them for *you*!"

she said. "For if Mr. Grimshaw hadn't come up into the nursery—if he hadn't been so fond of children—he'd never have seen me, and so he'd never have helped mother to patch up her impossible affairs, and get her compassionate allowance, and keep out of rooms in Hampton Court that she dreaded so. *You'd* never have come to Hampton Court. You've never been to Hampton Court in your life."

"I *have*," Dudley Leicester asseverated. "When I was a kid I scratched a wart off my hand on the hollies in the maze; there's the scar on the little finger. And I wish you'd call him Robert. I've told you so many times. It's deuced bad form to call him Mr. Grimshaw."

Pauline's lower lip curved inwards.

"Anyhow, mother's ambition to have a pony was a secret all the time."

"She might have had fifty ponies if I'd known," Leicester said.

"But you were engaged to Etta Stackpole all the while," Pauline mocked him. "You know you'd have married her if she had not flirted with the boot-blacks. You've told me

so many times! And anyhow, she didn't want fifty ponies: she only wanted one. And, now I'm off her hands, and she's been able to get one—there comes this. . . .”

For Mrs. Lucas, driving out with her pony for the third time in the Forest, the pony—white, with extreme age—had fallen, and lay still, and a March storm had come sweeping up from the Solent. So that there was the pneumonia.

“And the only reason I tell you all this,” Pauline said, “is to make you very quiet and good, and careful not to knock things over, because it's such a tiny box of a place, and you're such a clumsy creature, and falling crockery is so bad for a weak heart. I should say it's worse than sudden deaths or runaway marriages. . . .”

But Dudley Leicester had no chance of breaking his mother-in-law's china. He was fond of standing before her little mantelshelf, and, with a motion of his shoulder-blades, knocking her blue vases into the fender, and his dismal contrition then had always been almost worse for Mrs. Lucas's nerves than the

actual crash and collision. He had no chance, because the little cottage was full to overflowing. There were two nurses in attendance; there were a doctor and a specialist at the moment of the Leicesters' arrival, and there was only one spare bedroom, and only one servant. And there was no other dwelling-place within seven miles. Dudley Leicester was left to imagine that it was the cold, calm, closely-lipped nurses in their white aprons that seemed to stand out so stiffly, to take up so much space, and with their rustlings so to fill the tiny house—that it was they who sent the quite dismal Dudley Leicester back to town. But no doubt, though she never let him suspect it, or the shadow of it, it was Pauline. With the secret consciousness that his presence, though he never went near the sick-room, was a constant torture to her mother—it was Pauline who really ejected him from the cottage, who put against the fact that he was willing to sleep on the sofa or in the loft over the white pony's stable the other fact—that Ann, the servant, was terribly overworked already, with so many extra beds to make, meals to cook, and plates to wash up. In

fact, gay and brave and pleading, Pauline put her hands on her husband's chest and pushed him backwards out of the crowded house. And he never realized that it was she who did it.

IV

So tall that he looked over most men's heads, so strong that his movements must be for ever circumscribed and timid, Dudley Leicester had never in his life done anything—he had not even been in the Guards. Least of all did he ever realize personal attitudes in those around him. The minute jealousies, the very deep hatreds, and the strong passions that swelled in his particular world of deep idleness, of high feeling, and of want of occupation—in this world where, since no man had any need of anything to do, there were so many things to feel—Dudley Leicester perceived absolutely nothing, no complexities, no mixed relationships. To him a man was a man, a woman a woman; the leader in a newspaper was a series of convincing facts, of satisfying views, and of final ideals. Belonging as he did to the governing classes, Dudley Leicester had not even the

one outlet for passion that is open to these highly groomed and stall-fed creatures. The tradition of the public service was in his blood. He owned a slice of his kingdom that was more than microscopic on the map. But though he had come into his great possessions at the age of twenty-seven, he made no effort whatever to put things straight, since he had more than enough to satisfy his simple needs, —to provide him with a glass bath and silver taps, to pay his subscription at his club, to give him his three cigars a day, his box at a music-hall once a week, his month on the Riviera—and to leave him a thousand or two over every year, which was the fact most worrying to his existence.

It was Robert Grimshaw who set his estates in order ; who found him a young, hard steward with modern methods ; who saw to it that he built additions to several Church schools, and who directed the steward to cut down the rent on overburdened farms, to raise other rents, to provide allotments, to plant heavy land with trees, and to let the shootings to real advantage. It was, indeed, Robert Grimshaw who raised Dudley Leicester's income to figures

that in other circumstances Leicester would have found intolerable. But, on the other hand, it was Robert Grimshaw who put all the surplus back into the estates, who had all the gates rehung, all the hedges replanted, all the roofs of the barns ripped and retiled, and all the cottages rebuilt. And it was Robert Grimshaw who provided him with his Pauline.

So that at thirty-two, with a wife whom already people regarded as likely to be the making of him, a model landlord, perfectly sure of a seat in the House, without a characteristic of any kind or an enemy in the world, there, gentle and exquisitely groomed, Dudley Leicester was a morning or so after his return to town. Standing in front of his mantelshelf in a not too large dining-room of Curzon Street, he surveyed his breakfast-table with an air of immense indifference, of immense solitude, and of immense want of occupation. His shoulder-blades rubbed the glass front of the clock, his hand from time to time lightly pulled his moustache, his face was empty, but with an emptiness of depression. He had nothing in the world to do. Nothing whatever !

So that turning round to take a note from the frame of the mirror behind him was with him positively an action of immense importance. He hadn't a visit to pay to his tailor; there wouldn't be at his club or in the Park anyone that he wanted to be talked to by. The one bright spot in his day was the P—— exercise that he would take just before lunch in his bath-room before the open window. This interested him. This really engrossed him. It engrossed him because of his docility, his instructor having told him that, unless he paid an exact attention to each motion of his hands and wrists the exercises would cause him no benefit whatever. He longed immensely for physical benefit, for he suffered from constant panics and ideas of ill-health. He remembered that he had an aunt who had been a consumptive; therefore he dreaded tuberculosis. He had read in some paper that the constant string of vehicles passing us in the streets of London so acted on the optic nerves that general paralysis was often induced. Therefore sometimes he walked along the streets with his eyes shut; he instructed his chauffeur to drive him from place to place only by way of

back streets and secluded squares, and he abandoned the habit of standing in the window of his club, which overlooked Piccadilly. Because Pauline, by diverting his thoughts, diverted also these melancholy forebodings, he imagined that marriage had done him a great deal of good. The letter that he took from the mantelshelf contained an invitation from the Phyllis Trevors to dine that night at the Equator Club, and to go afterwards to the Esmeralda, the front row of whose stalls Phyllis Trevors had engaged. That matter was one for deep and earnest consideration, since Dudley Leicester had passed his last three evenings at the place of entertainment in question, and was beginning to feel himself surfeited with its particular attractions. Moreover, the Phyllis Trevors informed him that Etta Stackpole—now Lady Hudson—was to be one of the party. But, on the other hand, if he didn't go to the Phyllis Trevors, where in the world was he to spend his evening?

Promptly upon his return to town, he had despatched letters to the various more stately houses where he and Pauline were to have dined—letters excusing himself and his wife

on account of the extreme indisposition of his wife's mother. He dreaded, in fact, to go to a dinner alone ; he was always afraid of being taken ill between the soup and the fish ; he suffered from an unutterable shyness ; he was intolerably afraid of "making an ass of himself." He felt safe, however, as long as Pauline had her eyes on him. But the Phyllis Trevors' dinners were much more like what he called "a rag." If he felt an uncontrollable impulse to do something absurd—to balance, for instance, a full glass on the top of his head or to flip drops of wine at his neighbour's bare shoulders—nobody would be seriously perturbed. It was not necessary to do either of these things, but you might if you wanted to ; and all the Phyllis Trevors' women could be trusted either to put up the conversation for you, or—which was quite as good—to flirt prodigiously with their neighbours on the other side. The turning-point of his deliberations, which lasted exactly three-quarters of an hour, the actual impulse which sent him out of the room to the telephone in the hall, came from the remembrance that Pauline had made him promise not to be an irrational idiot.

He had promised to go out to *some* dinners, and it was only dinners of the Phyllis Trevors' sort that he could bring himself to face. So that, having telephoned his acceptance to Mrs. Trevor, who called him the Great Chief Long-in-the-fork, and wanted to know why his voice sounded like an undertaker's mute, a comparative tranquillity reigned in Dudley Leicester's soul. This tranquillity was only ended when at the dinner-table he had at his side red-lipped, deep-voiced, black-haired, large, warm, scented, and utterly uncontrollable Etta Stackpole. She had three dark red roses in her hair.

V

ETTA STACKPOLE—now Lady Hudson—had been Dudley Leicester's first and very ardent passion. She was very much his age, and, commencing in a boy-and-girl affair, the engagement had lasted many years. She was the only daughter of the Stackpoles of Cove Place, and she had all the wilfulness of an only daughter, and all the desperate acquisitiveness of the Elizabethan freebooters from whom she was descended. Robert Grimshaw said once that her life was a series of cutting-out expeditions; her maids used to declare that they certainly could not trust their young men in the hall if Miss Etta was likely to come down the stairs. It was perhaps her utter disrespect for the dictates of class that made Dudley Leicester finally and quite suddenly break off from her.

It was not exactly the case that he had

caught her flirting with a boot-black. The man was the son of the farrier at Cove, and he had the merit of riding uncommonly straight to hounds. Dudley Leicester—one of those men who are essentially monogamous—had suffered unheard-of agonies at hunt balls, in grand stands ; he had known the landscape near the Park to look like hell ; he had supported somehow innumerable Greshams, Hewards, Traceys, Stackpole cousins, and Boveys. But the name of Bugle stuck in his gorge. “ Bugle : Farrier,” was printed in tarnished gold capitals over the signboard of the vet’s front-door ! It had made him have a little sick feeling that he had never had before. And that same afternoon Etta’s maid Agnes had come to him, her cheeks distorted with pitiful rage, to ask him for mercy’s sake to marry Miss Etta soon, or she herself would never get married. She said that her young man—her third young man that it had happened to—had got ideas above his place because of the way Miss Etta spoke to him whilst he waited at table. So that it wasn’t even only the farrier ; it was the third footman too. His name was Moddle. . . .

That very afternoon—it had been six years

before—Dudley Leicester had announced his departure. He had, indeed, announced it to the maid Agnes first of all. It broke out of him, such a hot rage overcoming him that he, too, very tall and quivering, forgot the limits of class.

“I’m sorry for you, Agnes,” he had blurted out; “I’m sorry for myself; but I shall never marry Miss Stackpole.” The girl had taken her apron down from her eyes to jump for joy.

And very gradually—the process had taken years—hot rage had given way to slow dislike, and that to sullen indifference. He sat at her side at the dinner-table, and she talked to him—about concerts! She had a deep, a moving, a tragic voice, and when she talked to her neighbour it was with so much abandonment always that she appeared to be about to lay her head upon his black shoulder and to rest her white breasts upon the tablecloth. She perfumed herself always with a peculiar, musky scent that her father, years ago, had discovered in Java.

“Bodya,” she would say, “has the tone of heaven itself; it’s better than being at the best after-theatre supper in the world with the

best man in the world. But he uses his bow like a cobbler stitching. If I shut my eyes La Jeuiva makes me use all the handkerchiefs I can get hold of. *Real* tears! . . . But to look at, she's like a bad kodak—over-exposed and under-developed. She shouldn't be so *décolletée*, and she ought to sing in a wood at night. We've had her do it down at Well-lands. . . .

"But," she added, "I dare say you never go to concerts now."

"I haven't been to one since the ones I went to with you," Dudley said grimly.

"Ah!" she said. "Don't you remember our last? It was a Monday Pop. We were passing through town, all the lot of us, from the East Kent to Melton. What a lot of frost there was that year! Don't you remember? It was so hard on the Monday that we didn't go down to the Shires, but stayed up instead. And there was the quartette with Joachim and Strauss and Ries and Piatti! I wonder what they played? I've got the programme still. Those quaint old green programmes! I'll look it up and let you know. But oh, it's all gone! They're all dead; there are no

Pops now and St. James's Hall. . . . And yet it only seems yesterday. . . . Don't you remember how dear old Piatti's head looked exactly like the top of his 'cello in shape?"

Dudley Leicester, gazing rigidly at the tablecloth, was at that moment wondering how Etta Hudson got on with her footman. For as a matter of fact, Dudley Leicester's thoughts, if they were few and if they rose very slowly in his rather vacant mind, were yet almost invariably of a singular justness. He had broken off the habit of Etta Stackpole, who, like many troublesome but delightful things, had become a habit to be broken off. And Dudley Leicester had, as it were, chopped her off in the very middle because of a train of thought. She could carry on with the Traceys, the Greshams, the Stackpole cousins and the rest. If it pained him he could yet just bear it, for he imagined that he would be able to defend his hearth against them. But when it had come to Bugle, the farrier's son, and to Moddle, the third footman, it had suddenly come into his head that you couldn't keep these creatures off your

hearth. He knew it had been as impossible as it would be sickening. . . .

So whilst Etta Stackpole talked he had been wondering, not only how Lady Hudson got on with her footman, but how Sir William liked it. Sir William Hudson was the Managing Director of the Great Southern Railway Company. As far as Dudley Leicester knew, he passed his time in travelling from one end of the world to the other, whilst Etta carried on her cutting-out expeditions from a very snug harbour in Curzon Street, or from the very noble property known as Well-lands in Surrey. But, indeed, although the Leicesters and the Hudsons lived in the same street, their points of contact were almost non-existent, and since their rupture Dudley Leicester and Etta Stackpole had never met. His mother, indeed, who had managed his estate a little too economically till her death three years ago, had let Hangham, the Leicesters' place, which was just next door to Cove Park, and Etta, perhaps because she thought it was full time, or perhaps because she had stipulated for some agreeable arrangement with Sir William, had almost immediately "made a match" with the director of rail-

ways. And although it would be hard to say what was Dudley Leicester's "line," we may put it down in his own words that railway directors were not in it. But vaguely and without much interest, at odd moments Dudley Leicester had gathered—it is impossible to know how one does gather these things, or perhaps Robert Grimshaw had really formulated the idea for his simple brain—that the Hudsons were one of several predatory and semi-detached couples. They didn't interfere apparently with each other. They hit where they liked, like what used to be called "chain shot," dangerous missiles consisting of two cannon-balls chained one to the other and whirling through Society. Robert Grimshaw had certainly gained this impression from his two friends, the Senhora de Bogota and Madame de Mauvesine, the wives of two of the diplomatic body in London, two ladies who, though they were upon the most intimate of terms with Etta Hudson, were yet in a perpetual state of shocked and admiring envy. It was as if, witnessing Etta's freedom, these ladies of Latin origin and comparatively circumscribed liberties, rubbed their eyes and imagined that

they had been allowed to witness scenes from a fairyland—from a veritable Island of the Blessed. They couldn't imagine how it was possible to be married and yet to be so absolutely free. They couldn't, indeed, imagine how it was possible to be so absolutely free in any state, whether married, single, or any of the intermediary stages. And, indeed, Senhora de Bogota, at that moment opposite them at the table, was leaning across the little blonde man who was always known as Mr. "Phyllis" Trevor, for much the same reason that Dudley Leicester came afterwards to be known as Mr. "Pauline" Leicester—Senhora de Bogota was leaning, a splendid mass of dark and opulent flesh, across her diminutive neighbour's form to whisper with a strong Brazilian accent to Madame de Mauvesine :

"Regardez donc cette Etta ! Ces Anglaises, a-t-on jamais vu rien de pareilles !"

And Madame de Mauvesine, blonde with coppery hair and a peaked, almost eel-like, face, raised her eyes to heaven, or rather to the ceiling that was painted to resemble a limpid blue sky filled with chains of roses and gambolling cherubs.

VI

ETTA STACKPOLE raised herself in the hansom that carried them home from the Esmeralda. She lifted her white hand above the roof, and the horse, checked suddenly, came to a vacillating halt at the kerb. They were midway in the curve of Regent Street, and it was about half-past twelve of a fine night.

"We're getting home much too fast," she said to the wordless Dudley Leicester. "There's such oceans to remember yet."

It was as if, years before, he had been married to a masterful woman. He could no more control her to-day than he could then. He saw her bend forward, lithe, large and warm, push open the apron of the cab, and the next moment she was on the pavement. He thought so slowly that he had no time to think anything at all before he found

himself, too, on the kerbstone, reaching up coins to the shadowy and thankful driver.

"I say, you know," he said, "if anybody saw us . . ."

She hooked herself on to his arm.

"I don't believe," she said, "that I did shriek on the switchback at Earl's Court. It's seventeen years ago now, and I was only fourteen at the time. But I've always said I never shrieked in my life." She moved herself half round him, so that she seemed about to envelop him in her black dress and hood, in order to gaze into his face. Her features appeared long, white, and seductive: her voice was very deep and full of chords.

"Whatever you can say against me . . ." she began and paused.

Regent Street was very much as empty or as full as it always is at that hour, the tall lamps sparkling, the hoofs of very few horses sounding in cadence to innumerable whispers in polyglot tongues.

"You don't know who will see us," Dudley repeated. He was conscious that, as they passed, groups and individuals swung round to gaze upon them.

"Whatever you may say against me," her deep voice came, "you can't say I've ever been untruthful, and I've always said I never shrieked in my life."

"You did then," Dudley Leicester asseverated. "And we were alone in the car; it was not anyone else."

They were at the top of Vigo Street, and suddenly she swung him round.

"Oh, if you're afraid to be seen," she said, "let's go down the back streets. They're as empty as sin, and as black. As to my shrieking, you can't prove it. But I *can* prove that you called me a penguin in your last nice letter to me."

In the black and tortuous streets, in the chilly and silent night, her warmth as she clung to him seemed to envelop him, and her subtle and comfortable Eastern perfume was round them, as it were an invisible cloud. He appeared to hang back a little, and she, leaning her body forward, her face back to him, to draw him along, as in a picture a nymph might lead away a stripling into scented obscurities into leafy woods.

"I might say," Dudley Leicester was urged

to a sudden lucidity, "that I couldn't have called you a penguin because I never rightly knew what a penguin was."

"Oh, but you did once," she said. "It is one of the things you have forgotten." She laughed. "So many things you had forgotten, but you are remembering them now."

She laughed again.

"Now you'll remember how you came to know what a penguin was. On that day—the day of the evening we went to the Monday Pop—we went to the Zoo. It was you who wanted to go there to be alone with me; you considered that the Zoo in that weather would be the most solitary place in London—the hard frost that it was. Colder than this, colder than you are now. You're thawing a little, you stiff creature. . . ."

She shivered under her cloak.

"We stopped most of the time with the monkeys, but we saw the penguins, too. Don't you remember?"

"I don't," he answered. "I don't want to. It would not have been like me to call you a penguin. You're not like one."

"Ah," she said, "when you're in love you

don't bother about likenesses. I'll bet you called your wife a penguin before you married her, or a tooth-brush, or a puff-ball. I've heard that men always transfer their pet names from woman to woman."

He attempted to blurt out that she was to leave Pauline out of it, but she cried:

"Oh, you traitor! You *have* called her one of these names. Couldn't you have kept them sacred? Isn't anything sacred to a man? I loved you so, and you loved me. And then. . ."

The memory of their past lives came suddenly over him.

"Go away," she said—"go away."

"I must see you to your door," he muttered, with a sense of guilt, and stood irresolutely, for she had torn her arm from his.

"I don't want you," she called out. "Can't I walk twenty steps without you?" And she began to glide swiftly away, with him doggedly on the very edge of the pavement beside her.

Suddenly she slackened her steps.

"What did you give me up for, Dudley Leicester?" she said. "What did you do it for? I cared more for your little finger

than for all the heads of all the other men. You knew it well enough. You know it now. You *feel* like a coward. Don't tell me you feared for the sanctity of your hearth. You knew me well enough. What I was then I am now."

She paused, and then she brought out:

"I've always wanted men about me, and I mean to have them. You never heard me say a good word for a woman, and I never did say one. I shouldn't even of your wife. But I am Etta Stackpole, I tell you. The world has got to give me what I want, for it can't get on without me. Your women might try to down me, but your men wouldn't allow it."

Dudley Leicester murmured apologetically, feeling himself a hypocrite: "Why should anyone want to down you?"

"The women would," she answered. "If ever my name got into the papers they'd manage it too. But that will never happen. You know women are quite powerless until your name does get into the papers. Mine never will; that's as certain as eggs is eggs. And even if it did, there's half the hostesses

in London would try to bolster me up. Where would their dinners be—where would the Phyllis Trevors be if they hadn't me for an attraction? . . .

"I'm telling you all this, Dudley," she said, "just to show you what you've missed. You're a bit of a coward, Dudley Leicester, and you threw me over in a panic. You're subject to panics now, aren't you—about your liver and the like? But when you threw me over, Dudley, it was the cowardliest thing you ever did."

Walking at her side, now that she had repulsed him, Dudley Leicester had the sensation of being deserted and cold. He had, too, the impulse to offer her his arm again and the desire to come once more within the circle of warmth and perfume that she threw out. The quiet, black, deserted streets, with the gleam from lamps in the shining black glass of windows, the sound of his footsteps—for her tread was soundless, as if she moved without stepping—the cold, the solitude, all these things and her deep-thrilled voice took him out of himself, as if into some other plane. It was, perhaps, into a plane of the past, for

that long, early stage of his life cast again its feeling over him. He tried to remember Pauline; but it was with a sense of duty, and memory will not act at the bidding of duty.

No man, indeed, can serve two women—no man, at any rate, who is essentially innocent, and who is essentially monogamous as was Dudley Leicester.

“ . . . The cowardliest thing you ever did in your life,” he heard her repeat, and it was as if in trying to remember Pauline, he were committing a new treachery to Etta Stackpole.

“ . . . For it wasn’t because you were afraid of my betraying you—you knew I shouldn’t betray you—it was because you were afraid of what the other women would say. You knew I should be justified in my actions, but you were afraid of their appearance. You’re a hypochondriac, Dudley Leicester. You had a panic. One day you will have a panic, and it will pay you out for dropping me. It’ll do more than pay you out. You think you’ve taken a snug sort of refuge in the arms of a little wife who might be a nun out of a convent, but it’ll find you.”

Dudley Leicester swore inwardly because

there was an interval of a sob in her rounded speech. He experienced impulses to protect, to apologize, to comfort her. She became the only thing in the world.

“And it’s because you know how bitterly you wronged me,” she continued, “that you behaved gloomily towards me. I wouldn’t have spoken like this if you hadn’t been such an oaf at dinner, but it’s up to me; you put it up to me and I’m doing it. If you’d played the game—if you had pretended to be cordial, or even if you’d been really a little sheepish—I might have spared you. But now you’ve got to see it through. . . .

“But no,” she added suddenly, “here endeth the first lesson. I think you’ve had enough gruel. . . .

“All the same,” she added as suddenly and quite gaily, “you *did* call me a penguin in the last nice letter you wrote me.”

He was by now so far back into his past that he seemed to be doing no more than “see Etta home”—as he had seen her home a thousand times before. It only added to the reality of it that she had suddenly reconciled herself to him after finally upbraiding him.

For, when they had been engaged, she had upbraided him as fiercely at least a hundred times—after each of her desperate flirtations, when he had been filled with gloom. And always—always—just as now, she had contrived to put him in the wrong. Always after these quarrels he had propitiated her with a little present of no value.

And suddenly he found himself thinking that next day he would send her a bunch of jonquils !

He was, indeed, as innocent as a puppy ; he was just “seeing Etta home ” again. And he had always seen her home before with such an innocence of tender passion, that once more the tenderness arose in him. It found its vent in his saying :

“ You know you’ll catch cold if you let your hood fall back like that.”

“ Then put it up for me,” she said saucily.

Her hood had fallen on to her shoulders, and in the March night her breasts gleamed. Both her hands were occupied with her skirts. He trembled—as he had been used to tremble—when his hands touched her warm and scented hair, whose filaments caressed his

wrists. In the light of a lamp her eyes gleamed mockingly.

“Do you remember the riddle with the rude answer?” she asked suddenly, “about the hare. There was a hare in a pit, sixty feet deep, and there was no way out, and a greyhound was let into it. How did the hare escape? And the answer was: That’s the hare’s business.”

She had hooked herself on to his arm again.

“What’s that got to do with it?” he asked thoughtfully.

“Oh,” she answered, “I was only thinking; it *is* the hare’s business, you know. That means that you can’t really get away from your past. It comes back again. Do you remember a French story called ‘*Toutes les Amoureuses*’? . . . about a man who had hundreds of adventures. And of each lady he kept a ribbon or a lock of hair, or a shoe-buckle—some trifle. And once a year he used to lock his door and take out these odds and ends—and remember—just remember! Well, Mr. Dudley Leicester, that’s a good thing to do. It’s an act of piety for one thing; it averts evil for another. It’s like touching for

the evil chance. If you'd done that for me—for my sake, because you had a good slice of my life—if you had done it . . . well! you'd not have been so desperately unhappy now."

"I'm not unhappy," he said, and he spoke the truth.

"Aren't you?" she mocked him. "Aren't you?"

They were within a few steps of her door, almost opposite where, black and silent, his own house awaited him—as if, reproachfully, it gazed at him with darkened eyes. And suddenly she burst into a carol, and with quickened steps she danced him onwards:

"He called me a penguin, a penguin, a penguin;
He called me a penguin a long time ago!"

She sang it to the triumphant lilt of "Voici le sabre!" And then they were on her doorstep. She had her key in the latch, the door went back into darkness.

"I'll prove to you you called me that," she said, and crouching forward, as she had bent to open the door, she caught the end of his sleeve and pulled him into the inner darkness. He could see nothing, and the heavy door was closed behind him.

PART II

I

AND suddenly, in the thick darkness, whirring as if it were a scream, intermitted for a moment and again commencing, a little bell rang out at Dudley Leicester's elbow. As suddenly, but with a more gracious diffusion, light welled down from above his head, and Etta Hudson's voice mingling with it :

“Stop that confounded thing ! I don't want all the servants in the house to know you are here.”

She leaned over the white and ormolu banisters : the light swinging over her head made a halo above her disordered hair ; her white shoulders gleamed.

“Stop it,” she said ; “Don't fumble so ridiculously. Don't you know how to take the thing off the hooks ?”

She laughed at him derisively ; her face disappeared as if she were about to continue her

upward journey. Then once more she was looking down at him :

“Tell whoever it is,” she said, “that Sir William is in Paris and Lady Hudson in bed. Say ‘sir’ when you speak, and they’ll think it’s the second footman, Moddle ! Don’t you remember Moddle ?” And again she laughed, and her ascent of the stairs was marked by the tips of her fingers, visible as if they were little white and creeping mice.

Dudley Leicester put the receiver to his ear. A peremptory “Are you 4,259 Mayfair ?” made him suddenly afraid, as if a schoolmaster had detected him in some crime. Hitherto he had had no feeling of crime. It was as if he had merely existed in the tide of his senses. An equally peremptory “*Don’t go away*” was succeeded by the words: “Get down,” and then:

“Is that Sir William Hudson’s ?”

Leicester answered—he had the words clearly fixed in his mind—but already he was panting :

“Yes, but Sir William’s in Paris, and Lady Hudson in bed.” And he did not omit to add “sir.”

Through his mind, quickened by his emotions of fear, there shot the idea that now they must

go away ; that it was all over ; that he was very tired ; that he must sit down and rest.

Then suddenly—still low, distinct, stealthy, and clear—the voice of the invisible man asked :

“ Isn’t that Dudley Leicester speaking ? ”

“ He answered “ Yes,” and then with a sudden panic he hung the receiver upon the hooks.

And Etta Hudson, descending the stair with the letter in her hand, saw him sitting dishevelled and dejected, as if all his joints had been broken, in the messenger-boy’s chair beside the heavy, dark table.

He rose suddenly, exclaiming : “ You’ve got me into this scrape ; you’ve got to get me out of it. What’s to be done ? ”

Standing on the bottom step of the stairs, she laughed at him, and she laughed still more while she listened :

“ How do I know who it was ? ” He poured forth disjointed sentences. “ I told you somebody would see us in Regent Street. It might have been your husband, or some black-mailer. London’s full of them. I can’t possibly ring them up again to ask who it was. Perhaps they spoke from a call-office. What’s to be

done? What in the name of God is to be done?"

A certain concern and pity were visible in her eyes: she opened her lips and was about to speak, when he exclaimed:

"It would break Pauline's heart. What's to be done?"

The line of her brows hardened, and she uttered a hard little laugh.

"Don't you know," she said; "why, my dear Dudley, the answer is: 'That's the hare's business.'"

His first action on awakening was always to stretch out his hand for the letters that his silent man would have placed by his side, and to glance at the clock on his dressing table to see how many hours he had slept. And, indeed, next morning his first sensation was one of bodily well-being and of satisfaction because the clock appeared to inform him that he had slept for three hours longer than was his habit. But with a slight feeling of uneasiness he remembered how late he had been the night before, and stretching out his hand for the letters, he heard a voice say:

“Are you 4,259 Mayfair?”

He had answered “What?” before he realized that this question was nothing more than a very vivid recollection. But even when he had assured himself that it was only a very vivid recollection, he lay still and discovered that his heart was beating very quickly. And so afraid was he that the motion of stretching out his arm would bring again the voice to his ears, that he lay still, his hand stretched along the counterpane. And suddenly he got up.

He opened one white-painted cupboard, then the other. Finally, he went to the door of the room and peered out. His man, expressionless, carrying over his arm a pair of trousers, and in one hand a white letter crossed with blue, was slowly ascending the staircase at the end of the corridor.

“You didn’t ask me a question,” Dudley Leicester said, “about two minutes ago?”

Saunders said: “No, sir, I was answering the door to the postman. This, sir.” And he held out the registered letter.

It was as if Dudley Leicester recoiled from it. It bore Pauline’s handwriting, a large, round, negligent scrawl.

"Did he ask our number?" Dudley inquired eagerly; and Saunders, with as much of surprise as could come into his impassive face, answered:

"Why, no, sir; he's the regular man."

"Our telephone number, I mean," Dudley Leicester said.

Saunders was by this time in the room, passing through it to the door of the bath-cabinet.

"As a matter of fact, sir," he said, "the only thing he asked was whether Mrs. Leicester's mother was any better."

"It's very odd," Dudley Leicester answered. And with Saunders splashing the water in the white bath-cabinet, with a touch of sun lighting up the two white rooms—in the midst of these homely and familiar sounds and reflections, fear suddenly seized Dudley Leicester. His wife's letter frightened him; when there fell from it a bracelet, he started as he had never in his life started at a stumble of his horse. He imagined that it was a sort of symbol, a sending back of his gifts. And even when he had read her large, sparse words, and discovered that the curb chain of the bracelet

was broken, and Pauline desired him to take it to the jeweller's to be repaired—even then the momentary relief gave way to a host of other fears. For Dudley Leicester had entered into a world of dread.

II

HE appeared to have become friendless and utterly solitary. Even his man Saunders, to whom he had been attached as he had been attached to his comfortable furniture and his comfortable boots, seemed to him now to be grown reserved, frigid, disapproving. He imagined that Saunders had a threatening aspect. Fear suddenly possessed his heart when he perceived, seated in the breakfast-room, well forward in a deep saddle-bag chair, with Peter the dachshund between his speckless boots, Robert Grimshaw.

“What have you come for?” Leicester asked; “what’s it about?”

Robert Grimshaw raised his dark, seal-like eyes, and Leicester seemed to read in them reproof, judgment, condemnation.

“To leave Peter with the excellent

Saunders," Robert Grimshaw said ; " I can't take him to Athens."

" Oh, you're going to Athens?" Dudley Leicester said, and oddly it came into his mind that he was glad Grimshaw was going to Athens. He wanted Grimshaw not to hear of his disgrace.

For although Grimshaw had frequently spoken dispassionately of unfaithful husbands—dispassionately, as if he were registering facts that are neither here nor there, facts that are the mere inevitabilities of life, he had the certainty, the absolute certainty, that Grimshaw would condemn him.

" I start at one, you know," Grimshaw said. " You're not looking very bright."

Dudley Leicester sat down before his coffee-pot ; his hand, with an automatic motion, went out to the copy of the *Times*, which was propped between the toast-rack and the cream-jug ; but it suddenly shot back again, and with a hang-dog look in his eyes he said :

" How long does it take things to get into the newspapers?"

It was part of his sensation of loneliness and of fear that he could not any more consult

Robert Grimshaw. He might ask him questions, but he couldn't tell just what question wouldn't give him away. Robert Grimshaw had so many knowledges; so that when Robert Grimshaw asked :

“What sort of things?” he answered, with a little fluster of hurry and irritation :

“Oh, any sort of thing; the things they do print.”

Grimshaw raised his eyelids.

“I don't see how I can be expected to know about newspapers,” he said; “but I fancy they get printed about half-past one in the morning—about half-past one. I shouldn't imagine it was any earlier.”

At this repetition, at this emphasis of the hour at which the telephone-bell had rung, Dudley seized and opened his paper with a sudden eagerness. He had the conviction that it must have been a newspaper reporter who had rung him up, and that by now the matter might well be in print. He looked feverishly under the heading of Court and Society, and under the heading of Police Court and Divorce Court. But his eye could do no more than travel over the spaces of print and speckled

paper, as if it had been a patterned fabric. And suddenly he asked :

“Do you suppose the servants spy upon us?”

“Really, my dear fellow,” Grimshaw said, “why can’t you buy an encyclopædia of out-of-the-way things?”

“But *do* you?” Dudley insisted.

“I don’t know,” Grimshaw speculated. “Some do ; some don’t. It depends on their characters ; on whether it would be worth their while. I’ve never heard of an authentic case of a servant blackmailing a master, but, of course, one would not hear of it.”

“But your man Jervis ? Or Saunders, now ? They talk about us, for instance, don’t they ?”

Grimshaw considered the matter with his eyes half closed.

“Jervis ? Saunders ?” he said. “Yes, I suppose they do. I *hope* they do, for we’re their life’s work, and if they take the interest in us that I presume they do, they ought to talk about us. I imagine Jervis discusses me now and then with his wife. I should think he does it affectionately, on the whole. I don’t know. . . . It’s one of the few things

that are as mysterious as life and death. There are these people always about us—all day, all night. They've got eyes—I suppose they use them. But we've got no means of knowing what they think or what they know. I do know a lot—about other people. Jervis gives me the news while he's shaving me. So I suppose I know nearly all he knows about other people. He knows I like to know, and it's part of what he's paid for. But as for what he knows about me"—Grimshaw waved his hand as if he were flicking cigarette-ash off his knee—"why, I know nothing about that. We never can; we never shall. But we never can and we never shall know what anyone in the world knows of us and thinks. You'll find, as you go on, that you'll never really know *all* that Pauline thinks of you—not quite all. I shall never really know all that you think about me. I suppose we're as intimate as men can be in this world, aren't we? Well! You're probably at this very moment thinking something or other about me. Perhaps I'm boring you or irritating you, but you won't tell me. And," he added, fixing his eyes gently and amiably upon Dudley Leicester's

face, "you'll never know all I know about you."

Dudley Leicester had become filled with an impetuous dread that he had "given himself away" by his questions.

"Why I asked," he said, and his eyes avoided Grimshaw's glance, "is that the postman seems to have been talking to Saunders about Pauline."

Grimshaw started suddenly forward in his seat.

"Oh," Dudley Leicester said, "it's only that I asked Saunders about a voice I had heard, and he said it was the postman asking when Pauline would be home, or how her mother was. Something of that sort. It seems rather impertinent of these chaps."

"It seems to me rather nice," Grimshaw said, "if you look at it without prejudice. We may as well suppose that both Saunders and the postman are decent fellows, and Pauline is so noticeable and so nice that it's only natural that an old servant and an old postman should be concerned if she's upset. After all, you know we do live in a village, and if we don't do any harm, I don't see why we should take it for

granted that these people crab us. You've got to be talked about, old man, simply because you're there. Everyone is talked about—all of us."

Dudley Leicester said, with a sudden and hot gloom :

"There's nothing about me to talk about. I've never wanted to be an interesting chap, and I never have been. I shall give Saunders the sack and report the postman."

"Oh, come now," Grimshaw said. "I know it's in human nature to dislike the idea of being talked about. It used to give me the creeps to think that all around me in the thousands and thousands of people that one knows, every one of them probably says something of me. But, after all, it all averages out. Some say good, no doubt, and some dislike me, and say it. I don't suppose I can go out of my door without the baker at the corner knowing it. I am spied upon by all the policemen in the streets round about. No doubt half the shop-assistants in Bond Street snigger at the fact that I help two or three women to choose their dresses and their brace-

lets, and sometimes pay their bills, but what does it all amount to ?”

“ Hell,” Dudley Leicester said — “ sheer hell !”

“ Oh, well, eat your breakfast,” Grimshaw replied. “ You can’t change it. You’ll get used to it in time. Or if you don’t get used to it in time, I’ll tell you what to do. I’ll tell you what I do. People have got to talk about you. If they don’t know things they’ll invent lies. Tell ’em the truth. The truth is never very bad. There’s my man Jervis. I’ve said to him: ‘ You can open all my letters ; you can examine my pass-book at the bank ; you can pay my bills ; you’re at liberty to read my diary of engagements ; you can make what use you like of the information. If I tried to stop you doing these things, I know I should never succeed, because you chaps are always on the watch, and we’re bound to nod at times. Only I should advise you, Jervis,’ I said, ‘ to stick to truth in what you say about me. It don’t matter a tinker’s curse to me what you do say, but you’ll get a greater reputation for reliability if what you say always proves true.’ So there I

am. Of course it's an advantage to have no vices in particular, and to have committed no crimes. But I don't think it would make much difference to me, and it adds immensely to the agreeableness of life not to want to conceal things. You can't conceal things. It's a perpetual strain. Do what you want, and take what you get for doing it. It's the only way to live. If you tell the truth people may invent a bit, but they won't invent so much. When you were married, I told Hartley Jenx that if you hadn't married Pauline, I should have. Everybody's pretty well acquainted with that fact. If I'd tried to conceal it, people would have been talking about my coming here three times a week. As it is, it is open as the day. Nobody talks. I know they don't. Jervis would have told me. He'd be sure to know."

"What's all that got to do with it?" Dudley Leicester said with a suspicious exasperation.

Robert Grimshaw picked up on to his arm Peter the dachshund, that all the while had remained immobile, save for an occasional blinking of the eyelids, between his feet. Holding the dog over his arm, he said :

“Now, I am going to confide Peter to Saunders. That was the arrangement I made with Pauline, so that he shouldn’t worry you. But you can take this as a general principle: ‘Let your servants know all that there is to know about you, but if you find they try to take advantage of you—if they try to black-mail you—hit them fair and square between the jaws.’ Yes, I mean it, literally and physically. You’ve got mettle enough behind your fists.”

Robert Grimshaw desired to speak to Saunders in private, because of one of those small financial transactions which the decencies require should not be visible between guest and master and man. He wanted, too, to give directions as to the feeding of Peter during his absence; but no sooner had the door closed upon him than Dudley Leicester made after him to open it. For he was seized by a sudden and painful aversion from the thought that Saunders should be in private communication with Robert Grimshaw. He strongly suspected that Saunders knew where he had spent those hours of the night—Saunders, with his mysterious air of respectful reserve—and it

drove him nearly crazy to think that Saunders should communicate this fact to Robert Grimshaw. It wasn't that he feared Grimshaw's telling tales to Pauline. It was that he dreaded the reproach that he imagined would come into Robert Grimshaw's dark eyes ; for he knew how devoted Grimshaw was to his wife. He had his hand upon the handle of the door ; he withdrew it at the thought that interference would appear ridiculous. He paused and stood irresolute, his face distorted by fear, and his body bent as if with agony. Suddenly he threw the door open, and, striding out, came into collision with Ellida Langham. Later, the feeling of relief that he had not uttered what was just on the tip of his tongue—the words : “ Has Pauline sent you ? How did she hear it ? ”—the feeling of relief that he had not uttered these words let him know how overwhelming his panic had been. Ellida, however, was bursting into voluble speech :

“ Katya's coming back ! ” she said. “ Katya's coming back. She's on one of the slow ships from Philadelphia, with an American. She may be here any day, and I did so want to let Toto know before he started for Athens.”

She was still in black furs, with a black veil, but her cheeks were more flushed than usual, and her eyes danced.

“Think of Katya’s coming back !” she said, but her lower lip suddenly quivered. “Toto hasn’t *started* ?” she asked. “His train doesn’t go till one.”

She regarded Dudley Leicester with something of impatience. She said afterwards that she had never before noticed he was goggle-eyed. He stood, enormously tall, his legs very wide apart, gazing at her with his mouth open.

“I’m not a ghost, man,” she said at last. “What’s wrong with you ?”

Dudley Leicester raised his hand to his straw-coloured moustache.

“Grimshaw’s talking to Saunders,” he said.

Ellida looked at him incredulously. But eventually her face cleared.

“Oh, about Peter ?” she said. “I was beginning to think you’d got an inquest in the house. . . .”

And suddenly she touched Dudley Leicester vigorously on the arm.

“Come ! Get him up from wherever he is,”

she said, with a good-humoured vivacity. "Katya's more important than Peter, and I've got the largest number of things to tell him in the shortest possible time."

Dudley Leicester, in his dull bewilderment, was veering round upon his straddled legs, gazing first helplessly at the bell beside the chimney-piece and then at the door. Even if he hadn't been already bewildered, he would not have known very well how properly to summon a friend who was talking to a servant of his own. Did you ring, or did you go to the top of the stairs and call? But his bewilderment was cut short by the appearance of Grimshaw himself, and at the sight of his serene face just lighting up with a little smile of astonishment and pleasure, Dudley Leicester's panic vanished as suddenly and irrationally as it had fallen on him. He even smiled, while Ellida Langham said, with a sharp, quick little sound, "Boo!" in answer to Robert's exclamation of "Ellida!" But Grimshaw took himself up quickly, and said:

"Ah! I know you've some final message for me, and you went round to my rooms, and Jervis told you I'd come on here."

She was quite a different Ellida from the plaintive lady in the Park. Her lips were parted, her eyes sparkled, and she held her arms behind her back as if she were expecting a dog to jump up at her.

"Ah! You think you know everything, Mr. Toto," she said; "but, *je vous le donne en mille*, you don't know what I've come to tell you."

"I know it's one of two things," Grimshaw said, smiling: "Either Kitty's spoken, or else Katya has."

"Oh, she's more than spoken," Ellida cried out. "She's coming. In three days she'll be here."

Robert Grimshaw reflected for a long time.

"You did what you said you would?" he asked at last.

"I did what I said I would," she repeated. "I appealed to her sense of duty. I said that, if she was so good in the treatment of obscure nervous diseases—and you know the head-doctor-man over there said she was as good a man as himself—it was manifestly her duty, her duty to mother's memory, to take charge of mother's only descendant—that's Kitty—

and this is her answer: She's coming—she's coming with a patient from Philadelphia. . . . Oh! she's coming. Katya's coming again. Won't it make everything different?"

She pulled Robert Grimshaw by the button-hole over to the window, and began to speak in little sibilant whispers.

And it came into Dudley Leicester's head to think that, if Katya Lascarides was so splendid in the treatment of difficult cases, she might possibly be able to advise him as to some of the obscure maladies from which he was certain that he suffered.

Robert Grimshaw was departing that day for the city of Athens, where for two months he was to attend to the business of the firm of Peter Lascarides and Co., of which he was a director.

III

WITH her eyes on the grey pinnacles of the Scillies, Katya Lascarides rose from her deck-chair, saying to Mrs. Van Husum :

“ I am going to send a marconigram.”

Mrs. Van Husum gave a dismal but a healthy groan. It pleased Katya, since it took the place of the passionately pleading “ Oh, don't leave me—don't leave me !” to which Katya Lascarides had been accustomed for many months. It meant that her patient had arrived at a state of mind so normal that she was perfectly fit to be left to the unaided care of her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Clement P. Van Husum junior, who resided at Wantage. Indeed, Mrs. Van Husum's groan was far more the sound of an elderly lady recovering from the troubles of sea-sickness than that which would be made by a neurotic sufferer from the dread of solitude.

Katya, with her tranquil and decided step, moved along the deck and descended the companion forward to where the Marconi installation sent out its cracklings from a little cabin surrounded by what appeared a schemeless jumble of rusty capstans and brown cables. With the same air of pensive introspection and tranquil resolve she leaned upon the little slab that was devoted to the sender of telegrams, and wrote to her sister Ellida, using the telegraphic address of her husband's office :

“Shall reach London noon to-morrow. Beg you not to meet ship or to come to hotel for three days. Writing conditions.”

And, having handed in this message through the little shutter to the invisible operator, she threaded her way with the same pensiveness between the capstans and the ropes up the companion and on to the upper deck where, having adjusted the rugs around the dozing figure of Mrs. Van Husum in her deck-chair, she paused, with her grey eyes looking out across the grey sea, to consider the purplish islands, fringed with white, the swirls of foam

in the greeny and slate-coloured waters, the white lighthouse, and a spray-beaten tramp-steamer that, rolling, undulating, and battling through the long swell between them and the Scillies, was making its good departure for Mexico.

Tall, rounded, in excellent condition, with slow but decided actions, with that naturally pale complexion and clean-cut run of the cheek-bone from chin to ear which came to her with her Greek parentage, Katya Las-carides was reflecting upon the terms of her letter to her sister.

From the tranquillity of her motions and the determination of her few words, she was to be set down as a person, passionless, practical, and without tides of emotion. But her eyes, as she leant gazing out to landwards, changed colour by imperceptible shades, ranging from grey to the slaty-blue colour of the sea itself, and her brows from minute to minute, following the course of her thoughts, curved slightly upwards above eyes that expressed tender reminiscences, and gradually straightened themselves out until, like a delicate bar below her forehead, they denoted, stretched and tensile,

the fact that she had arrived at an inflexible determination.

In the small and dusky reading-room, that never contained any readers, she set herself slowly to write.

“MY DEAR ELLIDA” (her letter ran),

“I have again carefully read through your report of what Dr. Tressider says of Kitty’s case, and I see no reason why the dear child should not find it in her to speak within a few weeks—within a month even. Dr. Tressider is certain that there is no functional trouble of the brain or the vocal organs. Then there is just the word for it—obstinacy. The case is not so very uncommon: the position must be regarded psychologically rather than by a pathologist. On the facts given me I should say that your little Kitty is indulging in a sort of dramatic display. You say that she is of an affectionate, even of a jealously affectionate, disposition. Very well, then; I take it that she desires to be fussed over. Children are very inscrutable. Who can tell, then, whether she has not found out (I do not mean to say that she is aware of a motive, as

you or I might be)—found out that the way to be fussed over is just not to speak. For you, I should say, it would be almost impossible to cure her, simply because you are the person most worried by her silence. And similarly with the nurses, who say to her: ‘Do say so-and-so, there’s a little pet!’ The desire to be made a fuss of, to occupy the *whole* mind of some person or of many persons, to cause one’s power to be felt—are these not motives very human? Is there any necessity to go to the length of putting them down to mental aberration?”

Katya Lascarides had finished her sheet of paper. She blotted it with deliberate motions, and, leaving it face downwards, she placed her arms upon the table, and, her eyelashes drooping over her distant eyes, she looked reflectively at her long and pointed hands. At last she took up her pen and wrote upon a fresh sheet in her large, firm hand:

“I am diagnosing my own case!”

Serious and unsmiling she looked at the

words ; then, as if she were scrawling idly, she wrote :

“ Robert.”

Beneath that :

“ Robert Hurstlett Grimshaw.”

And then :

“ *σας αγαπω !*”

She heaved a sigh of voluptuous pleasure, and began to write, “ I love you ! I love you ! I love you . . .” letting the words be accompanied by deep breaths of solace, as a very thirsty child may drink. And, having written the page full all but a tiny corner at the bottom, she inscribed very swiftly and in minute letters :

“ Oh, Robert Grimshaw, why don’t you bring me to my knees ?”

She heaved one great sigh of desire, and, leaning back in her chair, she looked at her words, smiling, and her lips moving. Then, as it were, she straightened herself out ; she took up the paper to tear it into minute and regular fragments, and, rising, precise and tranquil, she walked out of the doorway to the rail of the ship. She opened her hand, and

a little flock of white squares whirled, with the swiftness of swallows, into the discoloured wake. One piece that stuck for a moment to her forefinger showed the words :

“ My own case ! ”

She turned, appearing engrossed and full of reserve, again to her writing.

“ No,” she commenced, “ do not put down this form of obstinacy to mental aberration. It is rather to be considered as a manifestation of passion. You say that Kitty is not of a passionate disposition. I imagine it may prove that she is actually of a disposition passionate in the extreme. *But all her passion is centred in that one desire*—the desire to excite concern. The cure for this is not medical ; it is merely practical. Nerve treatment will not cure it, nor solicitude, but feigned indifference. You will not touch the spot with dieting ; perhaps by . . . But there, I will not explain my methods to you, old Ellida. I discussed Kitty’s case, as you set it forth, very fully with the chief in Philadelphia, and between us we arrived at certain conclusions. I won’t tell you what they were, not because I want to observe a

professional reticence, but simply so that, in case one treatment fails, you may not be in agonies of disappointment and fear. I haven't myself much fear of non-success if things are as you and Dr. Tressider say. After all, weren't we both of us as kiddies celebrated for fits of irrational obstinacy? Don't you remember how one day you refused to eat if Calton, the cat, was in the dining-room? And didn't you keep that up for days and days and days? Yet you were awfully fond of Calton. . . . Yes; I think I can change Kitty for you, but upon one condition—that you never plead for Robert Grimshaw, that you never mention his name to me. Quite apart from any other motive of mine—and you know that I consider mother's example before anything else in the world—if he will not make this sacrifice for me he does not love me. I do not mean to say that you are to forbid him your house, for I understand he dines with you every other day. His pleadings I am prepared to deal with, but not yours, for in you they savour of disrespect for mother. Indeed, disrespect or no disrespect, I will not have it. If you agree to this, come to our hotel as soon as

you have read it. If you disagree—if you won't, dear, make me a solemn promise—leave me three days in which to make a choice out of the five patients who wish to have me in London, and then come and see me, bringing Kitty.

“Not a word, you understand—not one single word !

“On that dreadful day when Robert told us that father had died intestate and that other—I was going to add ‘horror,’ but, since it was mother’s doing, she did it, and so it must have been right—when he told us that we were penniless and illegitimate, I saw in a flash my duty to mother’s memory. I have stuck to it, and I will stick to it. Robert must give in, or I will never play the part of wife to him.”

She folded her letter into the stamped envelope, and, having dropped it deliberately into the ship’s letter-box, she rejoined Mrs. Van Husum, who was reading “The Mill on the Floss,” on the main deck.

PART III

I

IN the shadow of a huge mulberry-tree, upon whose finger-like branches already the very light green leaves were beginning to form a veil, Katya Lascarides was sitting in a deck-chair. The expression upon her face was one of serenity and of resigned contentment. She was looking at the farmhouse ; she was knitting a silk necktie, a strip of vivid green that fell across her light grey skirt. With a little quizzical and jolly expression, her hands thrust deep into the pockets of cream-coloured overalls, Kitty Langham looked sideways for approval at her aunt. She had just succeeded in driving a black cat out of the garden.

They lived down there in a deep silence, Katya never speaking and eliciting no word from the child. But already the child had made concessions to the extent of clearing her throat or emitting a little "Hem !" when she

desired to attract her aunt's attention; but her constant occupation was found in the obstinate gambols of a pet lamb—a “sock,” as the farm-people called it—which inhabited the farmhouse, bleated before the door, or was accustomed by butting to send the garden-gate flying back upon its hinges.

This creature, about one-third the size of a mature ram, was filled with obstinacies apparently incomprehensible; it was endowed with great strength and a considerable weight. With one push of its head it would send the child rolling several feet along the grass; it would upset chairs in the dining-room; it bleated clamorously for milk at all meals when Kitty had her milk and water.

Against its obstinacies Kitty's was valiant but absolutely useless. With her arms round its neck—a little struggling thing with dark eyes and black hair, in her little white woollen sweater—she would attempt to impede the lamb's progress across a garden-bed. But the clinching of her white teeth availed nothing at all. She would be dragged across the moist earth, and left upon her back like a little St. Lawrence amongst the flames of the yellow

crocuses. And at these struggles Katya Lascarides presided with absolute deafness and with inflexible indifference ; indeed, after their first meeting, when Ellida Langham had brought the child with her nurse to the gloomy, if tranquil, London hotel, where Katya had taken from Mrs. Van Husum a parting which lasted three days, and ended in Mrs. Van Husum's dissolving into a flood of tears—at the end of that meeting Ellida had softly reproached Katya for the little notice she had taken of what was, after all, the nicest child in London.

But cool, calm, tall, and dressed in a grey that exactly matched her eyes, Katya “took charge.” And, during the process, whilst she said, “I shall want this and that,” or “The place must be on a hill ; it must face south-west ; it must be seven miles from the sea ; it must be a farm, with plenty of live-stock but no children,” Ellida watched her, silent, bewildered, and admiring. It seemed so improbable that she should have a sister so professional, so practical, so determined. Yet there it was.

And then they descended, Katya and Kitty

alone, into the intense silence of the farm that was found. It was on a hill ; it faced south-west ; it was seven miles from the sea, and the farmer's wife, because she was childless, surrounded herself with little animals whose mothers had died.

And there the child played, never hearing a word, in deep silence with the wordless beasts. This had lasted three weeks.

The gate was behind Katya's back as she smiled at the rolling hills below the garden. She smiled because the night before she believed she had overheard Kitty talking to the lamb ; she smiled because she was exhausted and quivering and lonely. She knitted the green necktie, her eyes upon the April landscape, where bursts of sunlight travelled across these veil-like films of new leaves that covered tenderly the innumerable hedgerows.

And suddenly she leaned forward ; the long fingers holding the knitting-needles ceased all motion. She had heard a footstep—and she knew every footstep of the farm. . . .

He was leaning over the back of her chair ; she saw, against the blue when she opened her eyes, his clear, dark skin, his clear, dark con-

templative eyes. Her arms slowly raised themselves; her lips muttered unintelligible words which were broken into by the cool of his cheek as she drew him down to her. She rose to her feet and recoiled, and again, with her arms stretched straight before her, as if she were blind and felt her way, her head thrown back and her eyes closed, an Oriental with a face of chiselled alabaster. And with her eyes still closed, her lips against his ear as if she were asleep, she whispered:

“Oh, take me! Take me! Now! For good. . . .”

But these words that came from her without will or control ceased, and she had none to say of her own volition. There fell upon them the silent nirvana of passion.

And suddenly, vibrant, shrill, and interrupted by sobs and the grinding of minute teeth, there rose up in the child's voice the words:

“Nobody must be loved but me. Nobody must be loved but me.”

They felt minute hands near their knees; they were parted by a little child, who panted and breathed through her nostrils. They looked at each other with eyes into which, very

slowly, there came comprehension. And then, over the little thing's head, Katya repeated:

"Nobody must be loved but me. Nobody must be loved but me." And with a quick colour upon her cheeks and the wetness of tears in her eyes, "Oh, poor child!" she said.

For in the words the child had given to her she recognized the torture of her own passion.

That night quite late Katya descended the stairs upon tiptoe. She spoke in a very low voice:

"The little thing's been talking, talking," she said, "the quaintest little thoughts. I've seen it coming for days now. Sometimes I've seen her lips moving. She's the most precise enunciation in the world."

"I wired Ellida this afternoon," Robert Grimshaw said.

"Then Ellida will be down here by the last train?" Katya answered, and he commented: "We've only got an hour."

"But little Kitty," she was beginning.

"No, no," he interrupted. "Nobody must be talked about but us. Nobody must be talked about but us. I'm as glad as you or

Ellida or Paul could possibly be about Kitty, but now that I have got you alone at last you're bound to face the music."

"But little Kitty?" Katya said. She said it, however, only for form's sake, for Robert Grimshaw's gentle face was set in a soft inflexibility, and his low tones she knew would hold her to the mark. She had to face the music. In the half-darkness his large eyes perused her face, dark, mournful and tender. The low, long farmhouse room with its cheap varnished furniture was softened by the obscure light from the fire over which he had been standing for a very long hour.

"Is it the same terms, then?" he asked slowly, and she answered:

"Exactly the same."

He looked down at the fire, resting his hand on the chimney-piece. At last she said: "We might modify it a little;" and he moved his face, his eyes searching the obscurity in which she stood, only one of her hands catching the glow from the fire.

"I cannot modify anything," he said. "There must be a marriage, by what recognized rite you like, but—that."

Her voice remained as level as his, expressing none of the longing, the wistfulness, that were in her whole being.

"Nobody knew about mother," she said. "Nobody seems to have got to know now."

"And you mean," he said, "that now you consent to letting nobody know it about you?"

"You did succeed," she evaded him, "in concealing it about mother. It was splendid of you! At the time I thought it wasn't possible. I don't know how you managed it. I suppose nobody knows about it but you and me and Ellida and Pauline."

"You mean," he pursued relentlessly, "you mean that now you consent to letting nobody know it about you? Of course, besides us, my solicitor knows—of your mother."

"At the first shock," she said, "I thought that the whole world must know, and so I was determined that the whole world should know that I hadn't deserted her memory. . . ." She paused for a wistful moment, whilst inflexibly he reflected over the coals. "Have you," she said, "the slightest inkling of why she did it?"

He shook his head slowly ; he sighed.

“Of course I couldn’t take you even on those terms—that nobody knew,” he said, with his eyes still averted. Then he turned upon her, swarthy, his face illumined with a red glow. The slow mournfulness of their speeches, the warmth, the shadow, kept him silent for a long time. “No,” he said at last, “there isn’t a trace of a fact to be found. I’m as much in the dark as I was on that day when we parted. I’m not as stunned, but I’m just as mystified.”

“Ah !” she said, “but what did you feel—then ?”

“Did you ever realize,” he asked, “how the shock came to me ? You remember old Partington, with the grey beard ? He asked me to call on them. He sat on the opposite side of his table. He handed me the copy of some notes your father had made for their instructions as to his will. It was quite short. It ran : ‘You are to consider that my wife and I were never married. I desire you to frame a will so phrased that my entire estate, real and personal, should devolve upon my two daughters, Ellida and Katharine, without

revealing the fact that they are illegitimate. This should not be difficult, since their mother's name, which they are legally entitled to bear, was the same as my own, she having been my cousin.'” Grimshaw broke off his low monologue to gaze again at her, when he once more returned his eyes to the coals. “You understand,” he said, “what that meant to me. It was handed to me without a word; and after a long time Partington said: ‘You understand that you are your uncle's heir-at-law—nothing more.’”

Katya whispered: “Poor old Toto!”

“You know how I honoured your father and mother,” he said. “They were all the parents I ever knew. Well, you know all about that. . . . And then I had to break the news to you. . . . Good God!”

He drew his hands down his face.

“Poor old Toto!” Katya said slowly again. “I remember.”

“And you won't make any amends?” he asked.

“I'll give you myself,” she said softly.

He answered: “No! no!” and then, wearily, “It's no good.”

“Well, I did speak like a beast to you,” she said. “But think what a shock it was to me—mother not dead a month, and father not four days, and so suddenly—all that. I’ll tell you how I felt. I felt a loathing for all men. I felt a recoiling from you—a recoiling, a shudder.”

“Oh, I know,” he said, and suddenly he began to plead: “Haven’t you injured me enough? Haven’t I suffered enough? And why?—why? For a mad whim. Isn’t it a mad whim? Or what? I can understand you felt a recoil. But . . .”

“Oh, I don’t feel it now,” she said; “you know.”

“Ah yes,” he answered; “but I didn’t know till to-day, till just now when you raised your arms. And all these years you haven’t let me know.”

“How did you know?” she asked. “How did you know that I felt it? But, of course, you understand me even when I don’t speak.”

“It’s heaven,” he said, “to know that you’ve grown out of it. It has been hell to bear the thought. . . .”

“Oh, my dear! . . .” she said.

"Such loneliness," he said. "Do you know," he continued suddenly, "I came back from Athens? I'm supposed to be a strong-minded man—I suppose I am a strong-minded man—but I turned back the moment I reached Greece because I couldn't bear—I could not bear the thought that you might still shudder at my touch. Now I know you don't, and . . ."

"Ellida will be here soon," Katya said. "Can't you hear her train coming down the valley . . . there . . . ? And I want to tell you what I've found out about mother. I've found it out, I've made it out, remembering what she said from day to day. I'll tell you what it was—it was trustfulness. I remember it now. It was the mainspring of her life. I think I know how the very idea came into her mind. I've got it down to little details. I've been inquiring even about the Orthodox priests there were in England at the time. There wasn't a single one! One had just died suddenly, and there did not come a successor for six months. And mother was there. And when she was a young thing, mother, I know, had a supreme contempt—a bitter contempt

—for all English ideas. She got over it. When we children were born she became the gentlest being. You know, that was what she always was to me—she was a being, not a woman. When she came into the room she spread soothing around her. I might be in paroxysms of temper, but it died out when she opened the door. It's so strong upon me that I hardly remember what she looked like. I can't remember her any more than I can conceive of the looks of a saint. A saint!—well, she was that. She had been hot-tempered, she had been contemptuous. She became what you remember after we were born. You may say she got religion.”

Katya, her eyes full of light, paused; she began again with less of exultation.

“I dare say,” she said, “she began to live with father without the rites of the Church because there was no Church she acknowledged to administer them; but later, she didn't want them. I remember how she always told us, ‘Trust each other, trust each other; then you will become perfectly to be trusted.’ And again, she would never let us make promises one to another. Don't you remember? She

always said to us: 'Say that you will do a thing. Never promise—never. Your word must be your bond.' You remember?"

Grimshaw slowly nodded his head. "I remember."

"So that I am certain," she said, "that that was why she never married father. I think she regarded marriage—the formality, the vows—as a desecration. Don't you see, she wanted to be my father's chattel, and to trust him absolutely—to trust, to trust! Isn't that the perfect relationship?"

Grimshaw said: "Yes, I dare say that is the explanation. But . . ."

"But it makes no difference to you?" she pleaded. In the distance she heard the faint grind of wheels.

"No," he said, "not even if no one else knew it. I'm very tired; I'm very lonely. I want you so; I want you with all my heart. But not that—not that."

"Not ever?" she said.

"No," he answered; "I'll play with my cards on the table. If I grow very tired—very, very tired—if I cannot hold out any longer, well, I may consent—to your living

with me as your mother lived with your father. But"—and he stood up briskly—"I'll tell you this: you've strengthened me—you've strengthened me in my motive. If you had shuddered at me as you did on that day years ago, I think I should have given in by now. But you didn't any longer. You've come to me; you raised your arms to me. Don't you see how it has strengthened me? I'm not alone any more; I'm not the motherless boy that I was. . . . Yes, it's heaven."

Her hands fell by her side. The sound of wheels filled the room, and ceased.

"If I'd repulsed you, you'd have given in?" she said.

The door fell violently back, and from the black and radiant figure of Ellida came the triumphant cry: "Kitty's spoken! Kitty's spoken! You've not deceived me!"

II

HE found Pauline Leicester in his dining-room upon his return to town. Little and serious, and always with the tiny smile about her lips, she was seated in his deep chair by the fireplace. He was happy and erect, with Katya's kisses still upon his lips, and for all the world he felt a tenderness.

"I got your letter," she said. "Miss Lascarides has come back; the child has spoken. I suppose you are very happy?"

He feared to detect jealousy in her tones; he found only a business-like precision.

"I was coming to dine with you," he said. "Can't you do with me?"

"Oh, we want you so much!" she said.

He had a sudden and black premonition.

"You're not on bad terms with Dudley?" he asked.

"Tell me," she said, "you were in town part of the time when Dudley was all alone? Mother died, you know, a week after you left for Athens."

"Oh, poor child!" Grimshaw answered.

Her lips moved a little.

"She suffered so much, poor dear; she was so brave." She looked up at him with a queer little smile. "I suppose we're born to suffer. It's up to us to be brave."

"Oh, but Dudley hasn't been giving you trouble?" he asked. "You aren't on bad terms with him?"

"One could not be on bad terms with Dudley," she answered. "But he's giving me trouble."

"The hound!" Grimshaw answered.

"Oh, it isn't what he does, it's what he is," she said quickly. She rose and put her little hand upon his arm. "Tell me, Robert," she said, "what has happened to him? He's very ill."

Grimshaw made a step back.

"Not tuberculosis, really?" he asked.

"I am sure he's very ill," she said, "mentally; he's quite altered. What's to be done?"

"My poor girl," Grimshaw voiced his tenderness and concern.

"Tell me," she adjured him, "what happened to him? It's something that's happened. He couldn't do anything. Tell me the truth!"

"How should I know?" he asked. "How should I know?"

"Sometimes he's quite the same; sometimes he's gay—he's too gay. And then . . ." She looked up. "He sits and thinks; he'll sit silent for hours. He's not spoken a word all the morning. And then suddenly . . . he'll shudder. And his eyes aren't the same; they aren't the same, you understand. It's as if he were afraid. Afraid! He cowers into a corner. What is it, Robert? You know."

Grimshaw was silent, pondering.

"Tell me!" she said. You *shall* tell me; you know. Is it religious mania?"

Grimshaw shook his head.

"No, I don't think it can be religious mania." He added: "It might be hypochondria—sheer anxiety about his health. He was always like that."

"No," she said, "he hasn't been near a doctor. It can't be that." She looked up at him with

a little, birdlike gaze. "I know what it is," she said, "it's another woman."

Robert Grimshaw threw up his hands that were still gloved.

"You aren't surprised," she said, and there was about her whole figure an air of a little and tender calmness. "It's no good your feigning surprise. I am sure you know all about it. Oh, I know what men are, and women. I have been a nursery governess, you know. Isn't it true that there was another woman?" and, at his hesitation, she pleaded: "Tell me the truth, there was!"

"Well, there was," he said.

"And it was Etta Stackpole," she accused him.

He saw her sit, looking down at the point of her umbrella.

"I've got to get him well," she said. "Tell me the truth."

"Yes, it was Lady Hudson," he answered. "But you aren't going to . . ."

"Robert dear," she said, with her little, clear, appealing voice. "You can't make such a mistake as to think that I am going to hamper Dudley. It's my task in life to keep him going."

Think it out. I'm not *really* the girl to give ourselves away. I turned Dudley out of my mother's house. I ought not to have done it, but mother could not bear him. Perhaps I valued mother more than Dudley—perhaps that was wrong. But I've heard you say: 'Do what you want and take what you get for it.' I'm taking what I get for it, and it's easier to do it because I know what men are."

"It wasn't Dudley's doing," Grimshaw said. "We can't even tell . . ."

"Robert, dear," she repeated, "I *have* been a nursery-governess, you know."

"Oh yes," he answered, "but you're a woman too."

"Oh yes," she imitated him, "but I'm a woman of our class. Don't you see the two things I've learned? One is, that we can't have what we want. I may have wanted . . . Well, that does not matter. But if I couldn't give, I could get—adoration. That's all there is to it."

Robert Grimshaw said suddenly: "Yes, you could make something out of poor Dudley."

"I won't say that it doesn't hurt," she took him

up: "it does. Or, no, it doesn't. Well, one can't say. . . . Up in the nursery at the Brigstocks' there were great big clumsy boys. They adored me, and it was my business to make men of them—at any rate, during the holidays. Well, they'd disobey me. Sometimes they'd even deceive me—rather meanly, in little things; and then they'd behave like Dudley. So that I'm used to it on a small scale. It's saddening that a man can't be quite true, even when he adores you; but he can't. That's all."

She was buttoning up her little black gloves, and she stood up to go.

"Wouldn't you like me," Grimshaw asked, "to break it to him that you know? I suppose he's got to know it?"

"Of course he's got to know it," she said. "He'll never be himself as long as he's trying to conceal it. But . . . I think I'll tell him myself. You see, he might not like you to know; it might make him shy. It's best to drink one's own black draughts." But when she reached the door she turned to say: "You might come along soon—quite soon. I shan't say more than three words to him.

Your coming in might relieve any strain. It would carry us over till bedtime."

"I'll be there well before lunch," he said. "It's twelve now."

As they stood on the doorstep, he taking his farewell, she brought out: "Mind, nobody's to blame but me, from the beginning. If it hadn't been for mother, I don't suppose I should have married Dudley. I knew I could make a good wife for him; I know I can make a man of him, and I know he adores me. But that isn't everything. I can put him into the sort of position he ought to occupy. But that's only being a nursery governess on a larger scale. It's a good piece of work. . . . But—but for mother . . . oh, poor dear!"—she broke off, and the blue eyes that gazed down the empty street were filmed over for a moment—"much it has profited mother to have me off her hands. It's five months now, and she's been dead thirteen days. Well, so long."

She waved her hand minutely to him from the pavement, and exclaimed: "Go in; you'll take cold!" and then she seemed to be blown round the corner into Curzon Street.

III

IN passing from the dining-room to his snugery at the back of the house, Dudley Leicester brushed against his tall hat. He took it from the rack, and surveyed distastefully its ruffled surface.

"Saunders," he called, "take this round to Tang's. They're to put a band on it a half-inch deeper, and to iron it. I hate a hat that's been ruffled."

"It *does* mark a man off, sir," Saunders said from the dining-room door.

Saunders had been considering with his master the question of dark shades in trousering, and the colloquial atmosphere seemed to remain in the air.

"Now, what the devil do you mean by that?" Leicester asked. "Do you mean it would help you to track him?"

"It helps you to place him, sir," Saunders

answered. He brushed the hat with his sleeve, and surveyed it inscrutably. "If a gentleman doesn't know that his hat's ruffled, it means that he's something on his mind. I mean, sir, it means that he belongs to the professional or merchant class, or below that. It's only gentlemen of leisure who can think of their hats at all times."

Dudley Leicester laughed.

"What an odd fish you are, Saunders," he said. "Get along, man, with the hat at once. I'm going to Mrs. Langham's with your mistress just after lunch."

He lounged towards his snugger, smiling to himself at the thought that Katya Lascarides had again refused Robert Grimshaw, though he and she, and Ellida and the child had been staying a week or more at Brighton together.

"A funny job—what?" he said. He had developed the habit of talking to himself whilst Pauline had been away. He looked at himself in the rather smoky mirror that was over the black marble mantel of a gloomy room. "What the deuce is it all about? She loves him like nuts; he's like a bee after honey. Why don't they marry?"

Looking at himself in the mirror, he pulled down one of his eyelids to see if he were not a little anæmic, for he had heard the day before that if a man were at all anæmic, the inner flesh of the eyelid was pale. A careful survey showed him that his eyelid was very red, and his eyes watering. He muttered: "Cobwebs! That's what it is! Cobwebs in the brain. . . ." He dropped himself into a deep, dark saddle-bag chair. In twenty minutes it would be time for him to take his exercise. "Umph! cobwebs!" he said. "Yes, I've had some of my own, but *I've* broken through them. Poor old Robert! He hasn't, though."

He suddenly realized that he was talking aloud, and then the telephone-bell rang at his elbow. He gave a grunt, swore, and switched off the connection, so that it would ring in the butler's pantry. And when he had got over the slight shock to his nerves, he sat for some time in silence. Suddenly he exclaimed: "What rot it was!"

He was thinking of what he called his cobwebs. It had all been a trifle, except that Etta was a devil. He would like to flay her hide with a whip. But he realized that it was

impossible that Pauline should have heard of it. At least, it was unlikely. If she had been going to hear of it, she would have heard by now.

He stretched his arms behind his head, and rested his crown upon his hands.

"Never felt so fit in my life," he said, "never."

Saunders—if Saunders knew—he wouldn't go and blab to Pauline. What good would it do him? Besides, Saunders was a decent sort; besides, too, the fellow who had recognized his voice, probably he was a decent sort, too. After all, blackmailers were not in his line. He doubted if he had ever spoken to a real bad hat in his life for long enough to let him recognize his voice. . . . And perhaps the whole thing had been a trick of his nerves. He had certainly been nervy enough at the time.

"All cobwebs," he said, "beastly cobwebs!"

Then all the dreadful fears that he had felt . . . they were all nothing! It would have broken Pauline's heart.

"She's had such rough times, little woman," he said, "such beastly rough times."

But though his cobwebs had been imbecile

enough, the remembrance of the pain made him wince.

“By Jove! I was nearly mad,” he said.

He had felt insane desires to ask strangers—perfect strangers in the street—whether they were the men who had rung up 4,259 Mayfair.

“By Jove!” he repeated again, “by Jove! And now it’s all over.”

He leaned back luxuriously in his chair; he stretched his long legs.

“Never so fit in my life,” he said; and he extended his long hand to take from the desk at his side a little carved box that Pauline had bought of a Japanese to hold his nail-scissors.

He had observed a little speck of dirt beneath the nail of his forefinger. And in the pleasant well-being of the world he half dozed away, the box held nearly to his nose. It exhaled a faint musky odour, and suddenly his eyes opened as he jerked out of his day-dream.

“Etta!” he said, for the box exhaled the scent that Etta Hudson always had about her—a sweet, musky, cobwebby odour. . . .

“By God!” he said; and he crossed himself as he had learned to do in St. Andrew’s, Holborn, where his wife worshipped.

The lines of his face seemed to decompose ; his head fell forward ; his mouth opened. Pauline was closing the door after her silent entry. It was a long, dusky slice of the rear-house, and he watched her approach, wide-eyed and panic-stricken, as if she held an animal-trainer's whip. The little smile was about her lips when she stood over his huddled figure in the light of the stained-glass window that had been put in to hide the dreary vision of house-backs.

She held out her little gloved hand ; her face was quite tranquil.

"She knows all about it," he said. "Good God !"

"Dudley, dear," she said, "I know all about it."

IV

ROBERT GRIMSHAW was pushing the electric button beside the Leicesters' entry when, hatless, the daylight falling on his ruffled hair, Dudley Leicester flung open the door and ran down the street.

"Oh, go after him ; go after him !" Pauline cried from the hall.

If Dudley Leicester had done anything at all in his life it was to run at school. Thus it was a full minute before Grimshaw came to the door of the little dark hat-ironing shop, in the middle of which Leicester stood, leaning over the counter, holding by the waistcoat a small man with panic-stricken blue eyes. Afterwards he heard that Leicester had asked where his man Saunders was. But for the moment he had ceased to shake the little hatter. And then, suddenly, he asked :

"Are you the chap who rang up 4,259 Mayfair?"

"Sir! sir!" the little man cried out. Dudley Leicester shook him and shook him: a white band-box fell from the counter and rolled almost into the street.

"Are you? Are you?" Dudley Leicester cried out incessantly.

And when the little man screamed: "No! no!" Leicester seized the heavy rounded smoothing-iron and raised it to the height of his arm so that it struck the brown, smoked ceiling. The little man ducked beneath the counter, his agonized eyes gazing upwards.

But at Grimshaw's cool, firm grasp upon his wrists, Leicester sank together. He passed his hand so tightly down his face that the colour left it, to return in a swift flush.

"I've got cobwebs all over my face," he muttered, "beastly, beastly cobwebs."

He did not utter another word. Grimshaw, taking him firmly by the arm above the elbow, led him back to his house, of which the white door still stood open.

The dark door of the snugery at the end of the long passage closed upon Leicester and

Pauline, as if upon a deep secret. In the hall, Robert Grimshaw remained standing, looking straight before him. It was, perhaps, the first time that he had ever meditated without looking at Peter, and the dog's large and luminous eyes fixed upon his face were full of uneasiness. Robert Grimshaw had always looked mature. In the dreary illumination from the fanlight above the hall-door he seemed positively old. The healthy olive colour of his clear, pale complexion seemed to have disappeared in a deadly whiteness. And whilst he stood and thought, and whilst, having gone into the dining-room, he sat deep in a chair with Peter before him, the expression of his face deepened gradually. At each successive progress of his mind from point to point, his mouth, which was usually pursed as if he were pleasantly about to whistle—his mouth elongated itself minutely, until at last the lips turned downwards. He had been leaning back in his chair. He leaned suddenly forward as if with fear and irresolution. His eyes saw nothing when they rested upon the little brown dog that turned its quivering muzzle up to his face.

He rose and stood irresolutely. He went,

setting down his feet very gently on the marble squares of the hall. It was as if he crept to the door of the room that held mystery. He could hear the voices of the servants and a faint clicking of silver being laid upon a tray. But from the room . . . nothing !

He stood listening for a long time, then gently he turned the handle and entered, standing near the door. Pauline Leicester was leaning over her husband, who was sunk deep into his chair. He had an odd, a grotesque aspect, of being no more than so many clothes carelessly thrown down. She looked for a moment round at Robert Grimshaw, and then again bent her tender face over her husband.

“Dudley, dear,” she said ; “don’t you hear ? It’s nothing. It’s all nothing. Listen !” She raised her voice to repeat : “It is all nothing. I have nothing against you.”

She remained seated on the arm of the chair, looking at him intently, mournfully, almost as Peter looked at his master, and the little dog paddling through the room stood up on its hind-legs to touch her hand with the tip of its tongue. She began to speak again,

uttering the same words, repeating and repeating them, hoping that some at least would reach his brain. He sat entirely still, hunched together, his eyes looking as if they were veiled and long dead. Pauline had ceased speaking again, when suddenly he passed his hand down his face from brow to chin, and then, as if the sudden motion gave her the idea that his brain might again have become alert, she repeated :

“Listen, Dudley dear. . . .”

Her voice, clear and minute, continuing in a low monotone, had the little flutings and little catches that so exactly and so exquisitely fitted the small quaintnesses of expression. And to Robert Grimshaw she appeared to look downwards upon Dudley, not as if she were expecting him to answer, but with a tender expression of a mother looking at a child many months before it can talk.

And suddenly she let herself down from the arm of the chair and glided over to where, in the gloom, Robert Grimshaw was standing beside the door. The little brown dog flapped after her over the floor.

“You had better go and get a doctor,” she said.

He answered hesitatingly: "Isn't it a little early?" He added: "Isn't it a little early to take it that he's definitely ill?"

"Oh, I've known that he's been definitely ill for a long time," she answered. "I ought to have called in a doctor before, but I wanted to consult you, so I waited. It was wrong. As it turns out, it was wrong, too, my not letting you speak to Dudley instead of me. You think it would hurt my feelings to hear a doctor say that he is actually mad. But I've been through with it already. I know it. The only thing now is treatment, and the sooner it begins the better."

Grimshaw's face set sharply in its painful lines.

"Don't say that he's mad," he said, in the most commanding accent she had ever heard him use.

"Just look at him," she answered.

Dudley Leicester, with the air of a dissipated scarecrow ruined by gambling, was gazing straight in front of him, sunk deep in his chair, his eyes gazing upon nothing, his hands beating a tattoo upon the leather arms."

"I won't have you say it," Robert Grimshaw said fiercely.

"Well, the responsibility's mine," she answered, and her tiny lips quivered. "There's my mother dead and Dudley mad, and I'm responsible."

"No, I'm responsible," Grimshaw said in a fierce whisper.

"Now come," she answered; "if I hadn't married Dudley, mother would never have had her pony-chaise or got pneumonia . . ."

"It was I that brought you together," Grimshaw said.

"Oh! if you put it that way," she answered; "there's no end to who's responsible. You may say it was the Brigstocks. But the immediate responsibility is mine. I ought to have called in a doctor sooner. I ought not to have given him this shock. Don't think I'm going to be morbid about it, but that sums it up, and the only question is how the thing is to be put straight. For that we want advice, and soon. The only question is who's to give it?"

"But what are the facts?" Robert Grimshaw asked.

“Oh ! you know the facts,” she answered.

“I want a few details,” he responded, “to give to the man I go to. When did it begin ? Have you seen any signs of fever ? Has he been off his feed, and so on ?”

Pauline opened the door gently. She looked over her shoulder to see if Leicester had stirred. She held the door just ajar when she and Grimshaw were outside.

“I used to think,” she said, “even when we were engaged, that there was something a little strange about Dudley. It wasn’t an unpleasant strangeness. No, it was an attraction. He used to be absent in his manner at times. It was that gave me the idea that there might be something in him. It gave an idea that he really had a brain that stuck to something. Of course, when I twitted him with it, when I got really to know him, I discovered—but that was only after we were married—that he was only thinking about his health. But since we’ve been married he’s been quite different. I don’t believe you really know Dudley. He is very quiet, but he does observe things, and he’s got a little humour of his own. I don’t suppose anyone else has ever noticed it, but it

is there. His fits of strangeness before we were married were very much like this. Not so wild, but still like this in kind."

She opened the door and peeped in. Dudley Leicester was sitting where he had been.

"As to fever—no, I haven't noticed that he's had any fever. He's eaten very well, except when these fits of gloom were on him; then it was almost impossible to get him to the table. I don't know when I noticed it first. He came down for mother's funeral, and it seemed to me to be natural that he should be depressed. But in between these fits he's been so nice, so nice!"

"I'll 'phone to Sir William Wells," Grimshaw said; "I'll 'phone at once."

"Oh, don't 'phone. Go!" she answered.

He hesitated markedly:

"Well, then, have Saunders with you in the room," he said, "or just outside the door."

She looked up at him for a moment, her blue eyes wide.

"Oh, *that*!" she said. "You don't need to have the least fear for me. Don't you understand—if he is mad, what it is that has driven him mad?"

He looked down upon her with a deep tenderness.

"I suppose it's the shock," he said.

"Oh no," she answered. "It isn't that; it's his feeling for me. Haven't you heard him say a hundred times: 'Poor little woman! she's had such a beastly time!' Don't you understand? The quality of his love for me was his desire to protect me. It's funny, isn't it?—funny enough to make you cry. He thought I'd had such a bad time that it was up to him to keep every kind of trouble from me. He's done something—with Etta Hudson. Well, and ever since he's been dreading that it should get to my ears—and me in mourning for dear mother, and he alone and dreading—oh, *dreading*. And not a soul to speak to. . . ."

Again she looked up into Grimshaw's eyes — and he was filled with an intolerable pity. She smiled, quaintly and bravely.

"You see," she said, "he was not afraid of what I should do but of what I should feel. I woke up and found him crying one night. Funny, isn't it? that anyone should cry—

about me. But I suppose he was feeling all that he thought *I* should feel. He was identifying himself with me. And now he's like that, and I don't feel anything more about it. But," she added, "that ought to satisfy you that I'm quite safe."

"Ah," he said, "but so often—these strong passions take exactly the opposite turn. Do have Saunders handy."

"Robert, dear," she said, "if he's mad enough for that, I should not mind his killing me. I should be glad."

"Oh, dear child," he answered, "would that be the way to help you to make a man of him?"

She reflected for a moment.

"Robert," she said, "how right you always are! I seem to be so wise to myself until you prove how wrong I always am. I thought it the right way for me to speak to Dudley. If I only *had*. . . . And oh, Robert," she said, "how good you are to us! How could we get on without you?"

He said suddenly, as if it were a military command:

"Don't say that. I forbid it!" He added

more softly : " I'll go to Sir William Wells at once. Katya says he's the best man of the kind in London."

" She ought to know," she said. " Yes ; go quickly. I've kept you talking only so as to let you know all there is to know. It's difficult for a wife to talk about these things to a doctor. He might not believe it if I said that Dudley was so fond of me. But *you* know, and you may make him believe it. For it all turns on that. . . . But I will have Saunders within call till you come back with him. . . ."

She went into the room, and, having touched the bell, stood looking down upon her husband with a contemplation of an infinite compassion. In the light of the stained glass at the end of a long passage of gloom she brought tears into Grimshaw's eyes, and an infinite passion and tenderness into his whole being. His throat felt loosened, and he gasped. It was a passion for which there was neither outlet nor expression. He was filled with a desire for action without having any guidance as to what it was that he desired to do.

And the discreet Saunders, coming up the

servants' steps to answer the bell, saw his master's friend strike himself suddenly on the high white forehead a hard blow with his still gloved hand.

“Ah ! I thought it would come to that,” he said to himself.

V

"WELL, you aren't looking very chirpy," Etta Stackpole said.

"I'm not feeling it," Robert Grimshaw answered.

He was leaning over the rails in the Row, and Etta Stackpole sat on a huge chestnut that, its body motionless as a statue, its legs planted wide apart, threw its arched neck from time to time into the air, and dispersed great white flakes of foam.

"Time goes on, too," he continued. "It goes on, and it's only you that it passes by."

"Thanks," she said, and she touched her hat with her crop.

With the clitter of stirrups and the creak of leather and the indistinguishable thud of hoofs, the riders went by behind her in twos and threes. Behind his back was the perpetual crushing of feet and whisper of innumerable

conversations, conducted in discreet undertones. It was a place of a myriad rustlings and small, pleasant sounds; and along the great length of the Row, vanishing into the distance, the young green of the leaves swayed in the April breezes. A huge cloud toppled motionless above the barracks, pink against the blue sky and dull in its softened shadows.

Robert Grimshaw had walked along nearer the rails than was his habit until he came to where Etta Stackpole—it was just as much her habit, so that he had known where to find her—was talking to three men in her brilliant way. And raising his head, Robert Grimshaw had inserted himself between Hugo van Voss, a Dutch Jew beginning to show adiposity, and Charles McDiarmid, who, with his grey peaked beard and slight lisp, was asking why she hadn't come to the Caledonian Market last Tuesday to look for bargains in the bric-à-brac that is displayed there upon the broad flagstones.

“Oh, I'm not a bit gone on bric-à-brac really,” she said, “and it's the most tiring thing in the world.”

“Well, Hugo there,” McDiarmid lisped

slightly, in his gentle and sibilant tones, "got a Chinese tapestry in scarlet silk as big as the side of the Ritz, with realistic dragons and mandolines embroidered on it in sky-blue and purple. He got it for thirteen and sixpence, and he's going to make dressing-gowns out of it."

Van Voss protested inaudibly.

"Oh, you are, you know you are," McDiarmid asserted gaily, "and we're going to carry you in triumph down the Mall. Get Van Voss to give you one, Lady Hudson, and get Grimshaw here to drive you down to Bushey on a coach labelled 'Queen of Sheba.'"

"He doesn't take me anywhere any more," Etta Hudson said.

And Grimshaw answered desultorily :

"Only give me a chance."

Etta Hudson sustained, with a brilliant indifference, the glances from the half-closed eyes of McDiarmid and those of the dark, large, rather insolent and inscrutable orbs of the stockbroker.

"Oh yes," she said to Grimshaw. "You take me down to Bushey again. I'm booked up three deep for the next six months, but I'll

chuck anybody you like except my dress-maker."

"Booked up?" Robert Grimshaw leant over the rails to say. "Yes, we're all booked up. We're an idle, useless crowd, and we never have an instant to do anything that we like."

McDiarmid, reaching over a long claw, caught hold of the shiny financier, and, hauling him off up the Row, seemed to involve him in a haze of monetary transactions. He was, indeed, supposed at that moment to be selling Van Voss a castle on the Borders, where the King had stayed.

"Well, we used to be chummy enough in the old days," Etta Hudson said. "Yes, you take me down to Bushey again. Don't you remember the time we went, and Dudley stopped at home because he thought he was sickening for the measles?"

It was then, after their eyes had encountered for a long minute, that Etta Hudson had said that Robert Grimshaw wasn't looking very chirpy. Except for the moments when their eyes did meet—the moments when each wondered what the deuce the other was up to

—Etta Hudson flung out her words with an admirable naturalness :

“Oh, take a pill, and don’t talk about the passing years,” she said. “It’s the spring that’s crocking you up. Horses are just like that. Why, even Orlando here stumbles at the fall of the leaf and about Chestnut Sunday. Yes, you take me down to Bushey. You know you’ll find me as good as a tonic. I should say you’re having an overdose of too-brainy society. Doesn’t Dudley’s wife go in for charity organization or politics? She’s a sort of a little wax saint, isn’t she, got up to look like a Gaiety girl? I know the sort. Yes, you tell me about Dudley Leicester’s wife. I’d like to know. That’s a bargain. You take me down to Bushey and talk about Dudley Leicester’s wife all the way down, and then you can talk about me all the way up, and we’re quits.”

Robert Grimshaw raised his eyes till, dark and horseshoe-like, they indicated, as it were, a threat—as it were, a challenge.

“If you put it up to me to that extent,” he said, “I’ll bet you a new riding-habit that you look as if you could do with, that

you won't come down and lunch in Bushey to-day."

"What's the matter with my habit?" she said. "I've had it six years. If it's been good enough for all that time, it's good enough for now. Give me time to say a word to old Lady Collimore. My husband wants me to keep in with her, and she's got a new astrologer living with her as a P. G. I won't be five minutes after I've spoken to her, and then I'm your man."

"You'll come in these things?" Grimshaw said.

"Oh, that's all right," she answered. "It's just popping into a taxi-cab and getting out at the Park gates and walking across the Park, and having lunch at one of those little 'pub' places, and then I suppose you'll let the taxi drop me at the door. You won't turn me adrift at the Marble Arch, or send me home by tram?"

"Well, you are like a man," Robert Grimshaw said. "You look like a man, and you talk like a man. . . ."

She tapped her horse with her crop.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said. "But I

wish—I wish to hell I had been one,” she called over her shoulder, whilst slowly she walked her horse along by the railings, searching with her eyes for the venerable figure and tousled grey hair emerging centaur-like from its bath-chair—the figure of the noted Lady Collimore, who had mysterious gifts, who had been known to make top-hats perform the feat of levitation, and whose barrack-like house at Queen’s Gate had an air of being filled with astrologers, palmists, and faith-healers.

And the first thing that, bowler-hatted and in her tight habit, Etta Hudson said to Grimshaw in the taxi-cab was :

“Now tell me the truth. Is everything that I’m going to say likely to be used as evidence against me?”

“Oh, come, come!” Robert Grimshaw said.

They were whirled past the tall houses and the flitting rails. They jerked along at a terrific rate down through Kensington until, falling into a stream of motor-propelled vehicles near the Albert Hall, their speed was reduced to a reasonable jog-trot.

“Then you only want to know things,”

Etta Stackpole said. "You see, one never can tell in these days what who's up to. There's no reason why you shouldn't have fixed it up with Leicester's wife. She can divorce him and have you."

"Oh, it's nothing of that sort," Grimshaw said.

She looked him up and down with her eyes, curious and scrutinizing.

"I should have thought," she said, "that she would have preferred you to Dudley. I'm only telling you this that you mayn't think me mad, suspecting the other thing, but I see you from my window going into Dudley's house, with your dog behind you. And I should have said that that child preferred you to Dudley, or would jolly well find out her mistake after she'd married him."

"Oh, it's nothing of that sort," Grimshaw reiterated.

"I'll take your word for it," she answered. "So I expect it's only curiosity that brought you here. Why do you always want to know such a jolly lot about people? It must give you a lot of trouble, and you don't make anything out of it."

"My dear child," Robert Grimshaw said, "why do you always . . . ?" He hesitated and she put in mockingly :

"Go in for cutting-out expeditions. That is what was on the tip of your tongue, wasn't it, Robert? I've heard you say that of me from half a dozen sources. Well, I'll tell you. I do what I do because I want to. It's a hobby."

"And I do what I do because I want to," Robert Grimshaw mocked her. "It's my hobby. We're Eve and the serpent. You want the apple and I want—I've got the knowledge."

"You have, have you?" she said. And when Grimshaw answered in the affirmative, she uttered a long and reflective, "Ah!" And then suddenly she said, "But this isn't in the contract. You ought to talk about Dudley's wife all the way down to Bushey. Tell me about her!"

They were whirling through the dirty and discoloured streets of Hammersmith, while pieces of waste-paper flew up into the air in the wind of their passage. It was a progress of sudden jerks, long, swift rushes, and of sudden dodgings aside.

“ Ah, Pauline Leicester !” Grimshaw said ; “ you haven’t got to fear her on one side, but you have on another. She’s a quaint, dear, cool, determined little person. I shouldn’t advise you to do Dudley Leicester any more harm because, though she’s not in the least bit revengeful, she won’t let you play any more monkey-tricks to damage poor Dudley. Don’t you make the mistake of thinking she’s only a little wax doll. She’s much more dangerous than you could ever be, because she doesn’t spread herself so much abroad. You’ve damaged poor Dudley quite enough.”

A sudden light came into her fierce eyes.

“ You don’t mean to say . . .” she said.

“ Oh, I don’t mean to say,” he answered, “ Dudley’s perishing of passion for you, and I don’t mean to say that you’ve spread dissension between Dudley and Pauline. It’s worse than that . . .”

“ What is it ; what the deuce is it ?” she interrupted him.

“ Ah,” he said, “ that’s not in the contract ! You shall hear as soon as we’re in Bushey Park, not before. We’re going to talk of Pauline Leicester all the way down.”

"I hear Katya Lascarides has come back," she said. "Well, then, about your Pauline."

"Well," Grimshaw said, "I've said you haven't got to fear Pauline's taking any revenge on you, but you have got to fear that she'll upset your little game with Dudley Leicester."

"What's my little game with Dudley, anyhow?" she said. "I don't want him."

"What Pauline's going to do is to make a man of him," Robert Grimshaw said. "She'll put some life into him. She'll put some backbone into him. He'll end up by being a pretty representative County Member. But your game has always been to make a sort of cross between a puppy and a puppet out of him. It's that little game that Pauline will spoil."

She turned a furious red.

"Now, before God," she said, "I'd have made a good wife to him. You haven't the right to say that to me, Robert Grimshaw." And she picked furiously at her thick riding-gloves with one hand after the other. "By Jove, if I'd my crop with me, I think I should lay it over your back."

"You couldn't lay it over my back," he

said placidly, "because I'm sitting down ; but I'm not insulting you in that way. I dare say you'd have been perfectly faithful to Dudley—faithful and probably furiously jealous too ; but you wouldn't have made a man of him. He'd have lived a sort of doll's life under your petticoats. You'd probably have made him keep a racing-stable, and drop a pot of money at Monte Carlo, and drop another pot over bridge, and you'd have got him involved all round, and he'd have dragged along somehow whilst you carried on as women to-day do carry on. That's the sort of thing it would have been. Mind ! I'm not preaching to you. If people like to live that sort of life, that's their business. It takes all sorts to make a world, but . . ."

Lady Hudson suddenly put her hand upon his knee.

"I've always believed, Robert Grimshaw," she said—"I always *did* believe that it was you who made Dudley break off from me. You're the chap, aren't you, that made him look after his estates, and become a model landowner, and nurse the county to give him a seat ? All that sort of thing."

"I'm the chap who did look after his estates," Robert Grimshaw said. "I'm not saying that I wouldn't have influenced Dudley Leicester against you ; I didn't, as a matter of fact. I never said a word against you in my life ; but it's possible, of course, that my taking up his land business, out of sheer meddlesomeness, may have influenced him against you. Dudley's got more in him than appears on the surface. Or, at least, he can stick straight in a way if he is put into it, and just about that time Dudley got it into his head that he *had* a duty to his county and his country, and so on . . ."

Etta Stackpole's fingers moved convulsively.

"Oh, my man," she said, "what the deuce's business was it of yours ? Why couldn't you have let him alone ?"

"I'm telling you the worst of what I did to you," Robert Grimshaw said. "I didn't take Dudley Leicester from you. I've never said a word against you, but I probably kept him from coming back to you once he had thrown you over. I don't mean to say that I did it by persuasions ; he was dogged enough not to come back, but I dare say he would have

returned to you if he hadn't had his mind occupied—if I hadn't occupied his mind with barn-roofs and rents and field-draining, and the healthy sort of things that keep a man off women."

"Oh, you devil!" Etta Hudson said. "Who'd have thought you had it in you? Where do you get it from? You look just like any other Park loafer."

"I suppose," Robert Grimshaw said speculatively, "it's because I'm really Greek. My name's English, and my training's been English, and I look it, and smell it, and talk it, and dress the part; but underneath I should think I'm really a Dago. You see, I'm much more my mother's child than my father's. She was a Lascarides, and that's a clan name. Belonging to a clan makes you have what no Englishman has—a sense of responsibility. I can't bear to see chaps of my class—of my clan and my country—going wrong. I'm not preaching; it's my private preference. I can't bear it because I can't bear it. I don't say that you ought to feel like me. That's your business."

"My *word*!" Etta Hudson said with a

bitter irony, "we English are a lost race, then!"

"I never said so," Robert Grimshaw answered. "I said you were an irresponsible one. You've other qualities, but not that one. But that's why I've been a sort of Dutch uncle to numbers of young men of our class. Dudley's not the only one, but he *is* the chief of them."

"And so you took him up, and dry-nursed him, and preached to him . . ."

"Oh, I never preached to him," Grimshaw said; "he had the intelligence to see . . ."

"To see that I'm an undesirable woman?" she asked ironically.

"To see, if it's held under his nose, that it's profitable and interesting and healthy to do the best for the people that Chance, Providence, whatever it is, has put under him in this world. It helps them; it helps him. He's got a desire by now to be a good landlord. It's a languid desire, but it's as much a part of him as his desire to dress well."

Etta Stackpole said:

"By gum!"

They were dodging between a huge electric

tram and the kerb of a narrow street beside a grim and squalid brewery ; they dipped down under a railway arch ; they mounted a rise, and ran beside a green, gay with white painted posts and rails, and surrounded by little houses. Etta looked meditatively in front of her with an air as if she were chewing tobacco.

“ By thunder, as Clemmy van Husum says,” she brought out at last, “ you dry-nursed him till he’s good enough for marrying a little person you’ve kept in a nursery, and she—— ”

“ She takes charge !” Robert Grimshaw said. “ She’ll give him personal ambition, or if she doesn’t do that she’ll make him act just as if he had it, in order to please her. He’d kiss the dust off her feet.”

“ Thanks,” she said spitefully. “ *Rub* it in.”

The cab swayed along in the gay weather.

“ What a father-protector you are,” she said, “ according to your own account, and all because you’re a—what is it ?—a Dago ? Well, well ! you’ve got all the virtues of Greece and all the virtues of us too. Well, well, well !”

“ Oh, come, come,” Robert Grimshaw said. “ I’ve given you your opening ; you’re quite right to take it. But I’ve not the least doubt

that I've got the Dago vices if any pressure came to bring 'em out. I dare say I shouldn't be straight about money if I were hard up. Fortunately, I'm not. I dare say I should be untruthful if I ever had occasion to be. I should be rather too tender-hearted and too slack to get on in the world if I had to do it—at least, I suppose so."

She said :

"Well, *well!* *Here's* a joke! Here we have—what is it?—a Dago—a blamed Dago, as Clement P. would say."

"You know the Van Husums?" Grimshaw interrupted her.

"Oh, I thought I'd tickle you," she said. "Yes, I know the Van Husums, and your Katya Lascarides was in their employment, wasn't she? But I'm not going to talk of your other flame, Mr. Robert Hurstlett Grimshaw. You don't play your Oriental harem trick in this taxi-cab. One man one girl's the motto here. I only introduced Clement P.'s name to stir you up; you're so *damn* calm."

"This is a fight," Grimshaw said. "You score one and go on."

"What are we fighting for?" she asked.

"Ah! that's telling," he said.

"If you only want to tell me I'm a bad, bad girl," she said, "I know it already. I'm rather proud of it."

"You ought to be," he said; "you play up to it well. But it's not that that would have brought me here. I've got an object."

"Want to make me promise to leave your adopted nephew in peace?" she asked.

"Oh, Pauline's taken hold again," Grimshaw said. "You aren't going to have another look in."

"Oh, I've had all I want of him," she said. "She can have the dregs."

"That's a pretty appropriate word at present," he said. "A good word for Dudley—dregs."

"What the deuce do you mean?" she asked. "Anything happened to Dudley?"

"You'll hear when we get to Bushey," he said. "I'll tell you when we pass the fifth chestnut of the avenue."

"What the deuce is it?" she asked.

He answered merely:

"Ah!"

Her hard eyes gazed straight forward through the screen of glass.

"Something happened to Dudley?" she said. "And it's not that his wife's lamning into him about me."

"Oh, Pauline takes it as the negligible thing that it was," Grimshaw said.

She uttered :

"Thanks !" still absently. Then "Dregs ?" she repeated. Suddenly she turned upon him and caught hold of his hand.

"It's not . . ." she began.

"You'll hear when we get to Bushey," he said. "It's ten minutes still."

"Oh, you devil !" she said—"you tormenting devil !"

He just lifted up one hand in token of assent.

"Yes, it's the function of the devil to torment the damned. You've had what you wanted in Dudley Leicester's case ; now you've got to take what you get for it—from his best friend."

"His wife's best friend," she said.

"And his wife's best friend," Grimshaw repeated calmly. They were shooting fast

over bad roads between villas. Etta Stackpole may have shaken with laughter, or it may have been merely a "Thankee, marm" in the road.

"Well, it's a damn funny thing," she said. "Here's our Dago God Almighty splitting himself to set up a bright and beautiful English family upon its respectable legs. What a lark! I suppose it's out of gratitude to the land that gives him hospitality. He picks up a chap without a backbone and turns him into a good landlord. Then, when he's made (I suppose you *have* made) perfectly sure of his morals, he hands him over to a bright and beautiful English girl 'of good family and antecedents' (that's the phrase, ain't it?), and she's to run the dummy along till it turns into a representative Cabinet Minister—not brilliant, but a good household article. That's the ticket, isn't it?"

Grimshaw nodded his head slowly.

"And so the good old bachelor makes a little family for himself—a little harem that doesn't go farther than the tea-table—with what he can get of Katya Lascarides for Sultana No. 1 and Ellida Langham and child for No. 2. No. 2's more platonic, but it's all

the same little dilly-dally, Oriental, father-benefactor game ; and No. 3's Pauline—little pretty Pauline. Oh, my eye !”

She regarded the gates of the Park flying towards them.

“What is it the Orientals allowed? Four wives and forty of the other sort? Well, I suppose you've plenty of lesser favourites. Why not take me on, too?”

“Oh, you!” Grimshaw said good-humouredly —“you'd always be upsetting the apple-cart. You'd have to be bow-stringed.”

“I believe a sort of Sultan father-confessor would be good for me,” she said, as she gathered her skirts together.

The car had stopped near the dingy yellow Park wall, whose high gates showed the bourgeoisie avenue and the broad, sandy road.

“Well, this has been what you might call a *conversation galante* so far.”

VI

THEY passed the little weather-beaten and discoloured lodge, waited for half a dozen deer that with delicate and nonchalant footsteps passed from the light of the broad road into the shade of the avenue; then they followed them into the aisle between the columnar trunks, the vista stretching to an infinite distance. The deep silence of the place seemed to render them both speechless. She walked, holding her long skirts held high.

Suddenly Grimshaw said: "Here's the fifth tree."

She answered: "I don't want to hear what's happened to him."

"Ah, but you've got to."

She averted her face.

"I know," she said.

"You've heard?"

Her voice was rather muffled when she said:

"No. I prophesied it. He's had a panic. Perhaps he's cut his throat. I don't want to know. It serves him right."

"He is mad," Grimshaw said slowly.

She stood quite still with her back to him. Her broad shoulders heaved.

"All right, it's my fault," she said. "You needn't rub it in. Go away."

"I'm not saying it's your fault," he said. "The point is whether he's curable or not. You might possibly help us."

She stood quite still.

"Why should I want to help you?" she said.

He looked at her statuesque limbs. Beyond her the level grass stretched out. The little company of deer wandered from a patch of cloud shadow into a patch of sunlight. The boughs of a small enclosure, heightened by vivid greens, shook in the April wind.

"Oh, don't take it too hard," he said. "I know what it's like."

She faced suddenly round upon him, her eyes rather staring.

"Who's taking it hard?" she said. "Let him rot." She added: "You devil, to tell me

not to take it hard! What do you know about it? Go and give someone else hell. I've done with you."

She began to walk away between the trees. After a while he followed her.

"Look here," he said, "if . . ."

She turned violently upon him, her eyes staring, her mouth drawn into a straight line.

"By God!" she threw out, "if you follow me, I'll throttle you!"

"Listen," he said. He called after her: "I don't believe it's really your fault. I'll wait here and tell you why when you're ready to hear."

She walked away fast, and then, finding that he did not pursue her, she wandered slowly and aimlessly between the tree-trunks. Close to him a bole of one of the great trees formed a table about knee-high. He took off his silk hat, and, holding it in his hand, sat down. His face was an ashy white, and slowly little drops of sweat came out upon his high forehead. He rose and went into the road, looking upwards along the avenue. At a little distance she stood leaning one hand against a tree-trunk, her head bowed down, her long skirt falling all around her feet, a tall

and motionless figure, shadowy and grey amongst the young green.

He returned to his bole. After a long time another small company of deer passed quite close at hand. Suddenly they quickened their pace, their feet rustling on the turf.

"Well," Etta Hudson said from close beside him, "what is it you want?"

He said: "It's like this: three days ago Dudley Leicester seemed to go mad. He assaulted a man after asking him an apparently senseless question. We have had him under observation ever since. And he's twice stopped strangers in the street and asked them the same question. When they've answered 'No' he attempts to assault them. He's got an attendant now, and if he's headed off before he can ask the question he's calm enough; but he won't speak a word."

Etta said: "You might let me sit down there; I can't stand." And when she was on the bole she asked expressionlessly: "What's the question he asks?"

"It's always," Grimshaw said, "whether the man—a perfect stranger—rang up your telephone number."

Etta Stackpole said : " Ah ! . . . "

She sat silent for a long time, looking down at the ground, Grimshaw standing before her and looking musingly at her face.

" Well, what is it you want to know ? "

" I want to know," he said, " what happened on the night he saw you home. "

" I didn't think," she said expressionlessly, " that you could play the cad as well as the private detective. "

Robert Grimshaw uttered sharply the one word, " Rot ! "

" Well, it's a cad's question, and you must have played the private detective to know that he saw me home. "

" My dear woman," he said, " don't the Phyllis Trevors know it, and Mme. de Mauvesine, and Mme. de Bogota, and half London. I am not making any accusations. "

" I don't care a pin if you are," she said.

" It's merely a question of this sort," he went on. " The doctor who's in charge of the case wants to know whether he had any shock on that night. He wasn't by any chance knocked down at a crossing ? He didn't fall ? The cab horse hadn't been down ? " She shook

her head minutely. "There wasn't any violent scene? Your husband . . ."

"Oh, he . . ." she said. "Besides, he was in Paris." Suddenly she broke out: "Look here, you don't know what this means to me. I don't mean to say that Leicester's very much to me, but still, it's pretty sickening to have it happen to him."

"Well"—Grimshaw conceded a point—"I'm not saying that it's your fault."

"Oh, I'm not worrying about whose fault it is," she said. "It's him. It's the thought of him, poor harmless devil!" She looked up at Grimshaw. "What doctor have you got? What does he say?"

"We've got a man called Wells," he answered. "He doesn't say much either way. He says he can't tell till he knows what happened."

She scrutinized his face.

"Look here," she said, "this *is* true? You aren't merely telling me a tale to get things out of me?" Grimshaw did not even answer her before she looked desolately down again. "Of course it's true," she said; "you aren't that sort."

"And you knew I knew already that he

saw you home and that he stayed two hours," Grimshaw said. "What I want to know is what gave him a shock."

"Ah! . . . you'd get that from his servant," she said. "He'd be sitting up for Dudley. Well, I don't care about that; I'd fight any case on that."

"Oh, don't worry," Grimshaw said. "I promise you that Pauline . . ."

"Don't you," she said suddenly, and clenching her hands, "don't you mention that little pink toad to me, if you want to get anything out of me. I hate her and I hate you! You got Dudley away from me together. Why, it's been like devils and angels fighting for a man's soul. That's what it's *been*. I'm a religious woman, though you mayn't believe it. I believe in angels and the devil, too." She pulled her skirt a little up from the ground. "I expect you'll say," she began again, "that you're on the side of the angels. Well, see what you've made of him, poor dear! This wouldn't have happened if you'd left him to me. It's-you that are responsible for it all—you, poking your nose into what doesn't concern you."

"Ah!" he said slowly and rather mournfully, "perhaps it has turned out like that if we get outside and look on. But as to which of us is which—angel and devil—I should not care to say."

She looked up at him.

"You wouldn't?" she said.

"You see," he said, and he shook his head slowly, "perhaps it's only a case of a square peg and a round hole. I don't know. If you'd had him you'd have let him be a loafer all his life. Perhaps that's all he's really fitted for. Possibly, by shoving him on to do things, Pauline and I—or I principally—have brought this sort of thing on. Englishmen haven't any sense of responsibility. Perhaps it's bad for them to have it aroused in them. They can work; they can fight; they can do things; but it's for themselves alone. They're individualists. But there is a class that's got the sense of duty to the whole. They've got a rudimentary sense of it—a tradition, at least, if not a sense. And Leicester comes of that class. But the tradition's dying out. I suppose it was never native to them. It was forced on them because

someone had to do the public work and it was worth their while. But now that's changing, it isn't worth while. So no doubt Dudley hadn't got it in his blood. . . . And yet I don't know," he said ; "he's shaped so well. I would have sworn he had it in him to do it with careful nursing. And Pauline had it in her—the sense of the whole, of the clan, the class, the county, and all the rest of it. Women have it much more often than men. That's why she isn't going for you. Only the other day she said to me : 'I'm not the sort of girl to give ourselves away.' "

"Now, look here," she said, "what right have you, a confounded foreigner, to run us down ? We take you up ; we let you be one of us, and then you gas. There's a great deal too many of you in the country. Taken as you are, on your own showing, poor dear Dudley, that you patronize—damn you—is worth a score of you. If you're so set on the public service why isn't it you who's standing for Parliament instead of him ? You're ten times as rich. You've a hundred times more the gift of the gab . . ." and she broke off, to begin again.

"Whatever you can say of him," she said "he doesn't go nosing out secrets and peeping and prying. He is straight and clear, and as innocent as a baby, and as honest as a die. . . ."

"If he's as honest as a die," Robert Grimshaw said, "why was he carrying on an intrigue with you all that time? He must have been pretty deep to keep it concealed from me."

She looked up at him with pale fury.

"Oh, you horrible-minded man!" she said. "How dare you! How dare you! You may kick me as much as you like. I am down. But you let Dudley Leicester alone. He's too decent to be jumped on by a man like you."

Grimshaw displayed a sudden and incomprehensible agitation.

"Then he hadn't been carrying on with you?" he said.

"Carrying on with me?" she mocked him, but with a bitter scorn. "Do you mean to say that you suspected him of that? I suppose you suspected him of fooling about with me before he was married to his Pauline, and after?"

What an unspeakable toad of a mind you've got !"

Robert Grimshaw said, "Good God !"

She struck her hip with her clenched hand. "I see it," she said, "you thought Dudley Leicester had seized the chance of his wife's mother being ill to monkey about with me. You thought he'd been doing it before. You thought he was going to go on doing it. You thought he'd managed to conceal it from you. You thought he was a deep, dark ne'er-do-well like yourself or any other man. But I tell you this: Dudley Leicester's a man in a thousand. I'm the only person that's to blame. I tell you Dudley Leicester hasn't spoken a word to me since the day we parted. I tell you I got him just that one night to show myself what I could do. He couldn't help being with me ; he had to see me home. We were all at the Esmeralda together, and all the rest of us were married, or engaged or coupled up somehow. He *had* to see me home as we lived next door. He did it with the worst grace in the world. He tried to get out of it. It was because he behaved so like an oaf that I set myself to get him. I swear that it is true. I

swear as I am a religious woman. I believe in God and things."

Again Robert Grimshaw said, "Good God!" and his agitation grew on him.

"Well," Etta Stackpole said, "what is there to get so upset about? It doesn't count in Dudley for dissoluteness. There isn't a man in the world, not even yourself, Robert Grimshaw, could get out of my having him if I set myself to it at that time of night and after that sort of evening. I'm not boasting about it. It's the nature of the beast that you men are. I set myself to do it because I knew it would mortify him; because it would make him feel he was a dirty sort of dog next morning. What are you in such a stew about?" she said. 'It wasn't anything to do with Dudley's real nature. I tell you he's as pure-minded as a sucking-lamb."

Robert Grimshaw was walking nervously up and down, striking the side of his trousers with his ebony stick.

"Oh," she said with a sudden gibe, "I know what's the matter with you; you're feeling remorse. You're upset because you suspected Dudley of being a mean hound. I know you,

Robert Grimshaw. You were jealous of him ; you were madly jealous of him. You married him to that little pink parroquet and then you got jealous of him. You *wanted* to believe that he was mean and deceitful. You wanted to believe that he was going to turn out a bad hat. You wanted to believe it so that you could take your Pauline off his hands again, and now you're feeling remorse because you suspected him. You knew in your heart that he was honest and simple and pure, but your jealousy turned you mad ; I know you, Robert Grimshaw. Well, go on feeling remorse. Get all you can of it. I tell you this : I got Dudley Leicester into my hands and I did what I wanted with him, and nothing happened to shock him except when the telephone bell rang and someone recognized his voice. I guess that was shock enough for him. I thought he was in for something. I could tell it by the look of his eyes, but that only proves the thorough good sort he was. It wasn't till then that he understood what he'd been up to. Then he was knocked flat."

"There wasn't anything else at all ?" Robert Grimshaw said. He had pulled himself to-

gether and stood with his stick behind his back, leaning upon it a little. "Yes I admit I misjudged Dudley ; but it's a queer sort of world. You're quite sure there wasn't anything else?"

"What more do you want?" she asked. "Could a chap like that have had anything more beastly happen to him? Besides, it's indicated in the form you say his madness takes. He's always asking who it was who rung us up. Doesn't it prove that that's what hit his brain? No, he wasn't thrown out of a cab. He didn't stumble. My husband didn't turn up, no. Nothing of the sort. He was just knocked plumb-centre by that chap saying: 'Isn't that Dudley Leicester speaking?'"

Robert Grimshaw's face was the hue of wood-ash.

"My dear Etta," he said with his gentle collectiveness. "It's perfectly obvious that you aren't responsible for Dudley's collapse. It was the meddling fool at the other end of the telephone."

"It was rather meddlesome when you come to think of it, but then perhaps he didn't know there was anything wrong in Dudley's being where he was."

"Perhaps he didn't," Robert Grimshaw said.

"Let's go and have lunch."

"Oh, I don't want any lunch," she said.

"Take me home."

She supported herself on his arm as they walked up the long avenue, for her footsteps were not very steady.



PART IV



I

“OH no,” the specialist said, “I don’t see what purpose it would serve, your telling his wife exactly what happened. I prefer, indeed, that you should not. No doubt it was the shock of hearing the voice on the telephone that actually induced the state of mind. But to know the fact doesn’t help us—it doesn’t help us towards the cure. All we can do is to wait. His chance is that he’s not such a very young man. If it had happened ten years ago there wouldn’t have been any chance for him at all ; but the brain-fibre—what the Germans call the *Hirnstoff*—is tougher now. Anyhow, we can’t say.”

Sir William Wells, an unreasonably lugubrious man of fifty, having in his eyes the look of a man doomed beyond hope, with ruffled grey hair, an untidy grey beard, very

dark eyebrows, a whitish complexion, in which tints of blue predominated, except that on his cheek-bones were patches of red so bright that he had the appearance of having rouged—with an air, in fact, of having had all his hair ruffled up the wrong way, and of remaining still a personage of importance—Sir William Wells repeated :

“All we can do is to wait.”

“Don’t you think,” Robert Grimshaw said—they were in the great man’s first-class consulting-room—a tall place, very gay, with white walls, bright plaster-worked ceiling, chairs with seats and backs of scarlet leather, and numerous cabinets inlaid with green and yellow wood, very shiny and new, and yet conveying a sinister suspicion that they contained not rose-leaves, silks, or bibelots, but instruments, diagrams, and disinfectants—“don’t you think,” Robert Grimshaw said, “that, since his mania, if it is a mania, is so much along the lines of his ordinary character, that is an indication that his particular state is not so very serious?”

“My dear sir,” the specialist answered, “what we’ve got to do is to establish whether

there is or isn't a lesion in the brain. His character's nothing to do with it."

"Of course we're in your hands," Grimshaw answered, "but I should have thought that a man who's been abnormal all his life . . ."

"My dear sir," Sir William repeated, shaking his glasses as if minatorily at Grimshaw's nose, "have you any profession? I suppose not. But if you had a profession you would know how utterly impossible the suggestions of laymen are to the professional. People come to me for this sort of thing because I have had thousands—literally, thousands—of similar cases. It's no good my considering individual eccentricities; my business is to put my finger on the spot."

"Then, what do you propose to do?" Grimshaw said.

"Nothing," the specialist answered. "For the present, absolutely nothing."

"But don't you think a change . . ." Grimshaw suggested.

Having entirely redecorated his house from top to bottom in order to indicate that he was more prosperous than Dr. Gegg of No. 161, Sir William, who was heavily indebted to

Jews, was upon the turning-point between bankruptcy and possible salvation.

"No," he said determinedly, so that he seemed to bay like a dog from his chest, "certainly not. If I am to cure him, I must have him under my own close personal attention. There's nothing to be done but to wait."

He rose upon the points of his toes, and then brought his heels sharply down upon the floor.

"You understand, we know nothing yet. Your friend doesn't speak a word. He's no doubt aware that he's watched. He has a companion whom I have personally instructed, and who will report to me. Get him to take as much exercise as he can. Keep him fairly quiet, but have him in the room when cheerful people are about. I will drop in at every moment of the day that I can spare."

He paused to glare at Robert Grimshaw.

"I'm a very busy man, but I'll pay special attention to your friend's case. I will try to be always in and out of Mr. Leicester's house. More I can't do."

Backed up as he was by Katya Lascarides' suggestion that Sir William was a good man, Grimshaw felt an intense satisfaction—even a gratitude—to Sir William; and whilst he slipped his five-pound note carefully wrapped round five shillings under the specialist's paper-weight, which was made of one huge aqua-marine, he uttered a formal speech of thanks.

“Mind,” Sir William shouted at him as he reached the door, “I don't promise you a cure. I'm not one of those quacks. But you know my position, and you know my reputation. I work from ascertained facts, not from theories. If it were possible to communicate with your friend—if he'd speak, or if it were possible to manipulate him—we might get at something. If, for instance, we could get him to stand with his heels together, his hands at his sides, and his eyes shut; but we can't get him to speak, and he doesn't listen when he's spoken to. There's nothing to do but wait until he does.”

A period of strain, enhanced by the continual droppings in of Sir William Wells, ensued for

the house in Curzon Street, and nothing happened, save that they all became personally acquainted with Sir William's idiosyncrasies. They discovered that he had a singular prejudice against the eating of fish ; that he was exceedingly insolent to the servants ; that he read the *Daily Telegraph* ; that he liked the singing of Scotch comedians, and considered all ballet-dancers to be physically abnormal. They also had the perpetual company of a gentle and black-haired youth called Held. This young man, with a singular slimness and taciturnity, had been put in by Sir William as if he were a bailiff in possession of Dudley Leicester. Dudley Leicester never spoke, the young man hardly ever ; but he was exceedingly nice in his table manners, and eventually Pauline made the discovery at dinner that he very much disliked cats, and was a Christian Scientist. And with these additions the household continued its way.

To Robert Grimshaw the bright spot in this tenebrous affair was the inflexible tranquillity of Pauline Leicester. Looking back upon it afterwards he seemed to see her upon the background of his own terrible pain—to see her as

a golden and vibrating spot of light. She spoke about the weather, about some improvements that were being made in the village of Icking, about the forthcoming General Election, about her clothes. She went everywhere that she could go without her husband. She went to "at homes," to private views, she was "at home." She had Dudley himself in her drawing-room where in the farther corners young Mr. Held and Ellida Langham held animated conversations so close to his passive form that it might appear that, monosyllabic as he always was, he was at least attentive to the conversation. She drove regularly in the Park with Dudley beside her, and most often with Robert Grimshaw sitting opposite them; but she never mentioned her husband's condition to Grimshaw, and her face wore always its little, tender smile. He was aware that in her there was a certain determination, almost a fierceness. It wasn't that in her deep black her face was more pallid, or that her features hardened. It wasn't that she chattered less. Her little tongue was going perpetually, with its infantile gaiety, if her eyes were for ever on the watch.

There was, moreover, a feeling of a General Election in the air—of that General Election in which Dudley, as a foregone conclusion, was to replace the member sitting for his division of the county; and one afternoon Robert Grimshaw came in to one of Pauline's "at homes." The little encampment round Dudley Leicester had its place usually in the small, back drawing-room which Dudley's great chair and Ellida's enormous hat and Mr. Held's slim figure almost contrived to fill. Dudley sprawled back, his complexion perfectly clear, his eyes gazing abstractedly before him, perfectly normal, perfectly healthy, on show for anyone who chose to look at him; and Ellida and Mr. Held joined in an unceasing and animated discussion on Christian Science. Robert Grimshaw, having addressed a word or two to Madame de Bogota, and having nodded to Mr. Balestier, who sat for a Midland county, and having shaken hands with Mrs. Jimtort, the wife of a Recorder of a south-western city, was moving slowly up to close in the little group in the background. And suddenly, with an extraordinary running step, Dudley Leicester shot past him straight at the member

for the Midland county. He had brought out the words: "Are you the man . . ." when already shooting, as it were sideways, between the people, Mr. Held had very lightly touched his wrist.

"You know," he said, "that you're *not* to talk politics this afternoon. We're all tired out."

Leicester passed his hand lightly down his face, and, turning slowly, went back to his arm-chair.

Mr. Balestier opened his eyes rather wide; he was a stoutish, clean-shaven man of forty-five with a rather disagreeable expression, who, probably because he was interested in South American railways, went about everywhere with the *Senhora de Bogota*.

"Oh, I say," he ejaculated to Pauline, "you have got them under your thumb, if it's you who insists they're not to talk politics. It seems to act like a military command."

And Pauline stifled a yawn with her tiny hand.

"Well, it's perfectly true what Dudley's secretary says. We are all nearly worn out,

so you'll have to excuse my yawning," Grimshaw heard her say from behind his back. "And Dudley hasn't been really well since he had the 'flu.'"

"Oh, you're altogether too nervous," Mr. Balestier's fat voice came. "Dudley's absolutely certain of his seat, and as for not well, why, he's a picture of ox-like health. Just look at him!"

"But he's so terribly thorough," Pauline answered. "He's much too wrapped up in this work. Why, he thinks about nothing else all day and all night. If you watch him you'll see he hardly ever speaks. He's thinking, I wouldn't mind betting, about how to win the heart of a man called "Down," with red whiskers, who's an Antipedobaptist and not our tenant, and supposed to be able to influence thirty Nonconformists' votes. You just keep your eye on Dudley."

"Oh, I'll take your word for his industry," Mr. Balestier said. "But I've got something much better worth keeping my eyes on."

"Is that meant for you or me, Madame de Bogota?" Pauline said. "Or possibly it's you, Mrs. Jintort!"

“As a matter of fact,” Mr. Balestier said, “I was thinking of Grimshaw’s dog. I feel convinced he’ll have a piece out of my leg, one of these days.”

Robert Grimshaw meanwhile was supporting himself with one hand on the blue curtains that decorated the archway between the two rooms. He was positively supporting himself; the sudden shock of Leicester’s shooting past him had left him weak and trembling. And suddenly he said:

“What’s the good?”

Ellida—for even Ellida had not yet recovered from the panic of Dudley’s swift evasion—took with avidity this opening for a recommencement of one of her eternal and animated conversations with Mr. Held.

“What’s the good of exposing these impostures?” she said. Why, all the good in the world. Think of all the unfortunate people that are taken in. . . .”

And so she talked on until Mr. Held, the name of Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy upon his lips, plunged again into the fray.

But Robert Grimshaw was not asking what was the good of Christian Science. He had

turned his back upon the front room. Nevertheless, every word that Pauline uttered had at once its hearing, its meaning, and its painful under-meaning in his ears. And when he had said, "What's the good?" it had been merely the question of what was the good of Pauline's going on with these terrible vigils, this heart-breaking pretence. And through his dreadfully tired mind there went—and the vision carried with it a suggestion of sleep, of deep restfulness—the vision of the logical sequence of events. If they let Dudley Leicester down, if they no longer kept up the pretence—the pretence that Dudley Leicester was no more an engrossed politician—then Dudley Leicester would go out of things, and he and Pauline . . . he and Pauline would fall together. For how long could Pauline keep it up?

The cruelty of the situation—of each word that was uttered, as of each word that she uttered in return, the mere impish malignancy of accidental circumstances—all these things changed for the moment his very view of Society. And the people sitting behind him—Madame de Bogota, with the voluptuous eyes

and the sneering lips ; Mrs. Jimtort, whose lips curved and whose eyes were cold ; Mr. Bales-tier, whose eyes rolled round and round, so that they appeared to be about to burst out of his head, and the deuce only knows what they didn't see or what conclusions they wouldn't draw from what they did see—these three seemed to be a small commission sent by Society to inquire into the state of a household where it was suspected something was “wrong.” He realized that it was probably only the state of his nerves ; but every new word added to his conviction that these were not merely “people,” bland, smiling, idle, and innocuous—good people of social contacts. They were, he was convinced, Inquisitors, representing each a separate interest—Mrs. Jimtort standing for provincial Society, Madame de Bogota for all the cosmopolitanism of the world's centre that Western London is, and Balestier for the Party. And outside there seemed to be—he seemed to hear them—the innumerable whispers of the tongues of all Society, canvassing the results of the report that would be brought back by this committee of inquiry. It worked up, indeed, to an utterly

abominable climax when Balestier, with his rather strident voice, exclaimed :

“ Why don’t you let me mote you down to Well-lands one day, Mrs. Leicester ? You ought to know the Hudsons. Lady Etta’s a peach, as I learned to say when I went over with the Newfoundland Commission.”

And at that even Ellida threw up her hands and gazed, her lips parted, into Grimshaw’s eyes. From behind his back, a minute before, there had come little rustlings of people standing up. He had heard Pauline say :

“ What, you can’t all be going at once ?” and he had heaved a great sigh of relief. But in the dead silence that followed Mr. Balestier’s words, whilst Robert Grimshaw was wondering whether Balestier had merely and colossally put his almost ox-like foot into it, or whether this actually was a “ try on,” Pauline’s voice came :

“ Oh, not just yet. I’m in mourning, you know. I think I go out a little too much as it is.”

“ Oh, she’s saved the situation again !” And then irresistibly it came over him to ask what was the good of this eternally saving the situa-

tion that neither of them really wanted to maintain. "She should," he said to himself fiercely, "give it up." He wasn't going to stand by and see her tortured. Dudley Leicester had given in, and serve him right, the cad! For all they could tell, he was having the time of his life. Why shouldn't they do the same?

"Oh, isn't she *wonderful*!" Ellida exclaimed suddenly. "I don't wonder . . ." And then she gazed at him with her plaintive eyes. The slim, dark Mr. Held brought out suddenly:

"It's the *most* wonderful . . ." but his voice died away in his jaws. "After all," he continued as suddenly, "perhaps she's holding the thought. You see, we Christian Scientists . . ." But again his voice died away; his dark eyes gazed, mournful and doglike, at Pauline's dimly-lit figure.

The tall, small room, with its large white panels, to which the frames of pale-tinted pictures gave an occasional golden gleam, had about it an air of blue dimness, for the curtains, straight at the sides, and half concealing the very tall windows, were of a transparent and

ultramarine network. The little encampment around Dudley Leicester occupied a small back drawing-room, where the window, being of stained glass that showed on its small, square panels the story of St. George, was, on account of its tall, dark furniture, almost in gloom. Little, and as it were golden, Pauline stood motionless in the middle of the room ; she looked upon the floor, and appeared lost in reflection. Then she touched one side of her fair hair, and without looking up she came silently towards them. Ellida was upon the point of running towards her, her arms outstretched, and of saying : “ *You are wonderful!*” but Pauline, with her brown eyes a little averted, brought out without any visible emotion, as if she were very abstracted, the words : “ And how is your little Kitty ? She is still at Brighton with Miss Lascarides ? Robert dear, just ring the bell for the tea-things to be taken away.”

It was as if the strain upon her rendered her gently autocratic to Robert Grimshaw, who watched her from another point, having settled himself down in the arm-chair before the

window looking into the little back room. Against the rows of the stained-glass window Ellida Langham appeared all black, impulsive, and ready as it were to stretch out her arms to enfold this little creature in her cloak, to hide her face under the great black hat with the drooping veil and the drooping feathers. But as he understood it, Pauline fended off these approaches by the attentive convention of her manner. They were in face of Dudley Leicester's condition; they had him under their eyes, but Pauline was not going—even to the extent of accepting Ellida's tenderness—to acknowledge that there was any condition about Dudley Leicester at all. It wasn't, of course, that Ellida didn't know, for Robert Grimshaw himself had told her, and Ellida, with her great and impulsive tenderness, had herself offered to come round and to play at animated conversations with Dudley and Mr. Held. But except by little pressures of the hand at meeting or at parting, and by little fluttering attentions to Ellida's hats and toilets when she rose to go, Pauline was not going to show either gratitude or emotion for the moment. It was her way of keeping her flag flying.

And he admired her for it as he admired her for everything, and looking down at Peter between his feet, Robert shook his head very sadly. "Perhaps," he thought to himself, "until she knows it's hopeless, she's not going to acknowledge even to herself that there's anything the matter at all."

II

BETWEEN his feet Peter's nostrils jerked twice, and a little bubble of sound escaped. He was trying to tell his master that a bad man was coming up the stairs. It was, however, only Sir William Wells who, with his brisk straightforwardness and his frowning authority, seemed to push himself into the room as its master, and to scatter the tables and chairs before him. In his harsh and minatory tones he informed them that the Marchioness of Sandgate had gone to Exeter with Mrs. Jjohns, and then he appeared to scatter the little group. It was, indeed, as if he had thrown Ellida out of the room, so quickly—whilst she exclaimed over her shoulder to Grimshaw : “ Well, you'll be round to dinner ? ”—did she disappear.

With his rasping voice, shaking his glasses at her, Sir William continued for some minutes to inform Pauline of the movements of those

of his patients who were of political prominence. They were his patients of that class uneasily dispersing over the face of the country, opening bazaars, bowling the first balls of cricket-seasons, devising acts of graciousness all night, putting them into practice all day, and perpetually shaking hands that soiled their delicate gloves. For that particular world was full of the whispered words "General Election." When it was coming no one seemed to know, for the Prime Minister with his amiable inscrutability very reasonably distrusted the great majority of his followers. This disconcerted innumerable hostesses, for no one knew when they wouldn't have to pack up bag and baggage and bolt like so many rabbits back to their burrows. This febrile condition gave occupation of a secretarial kind to great numbers of sleek and smooth-haired young gentlemen, but it was very hard upon the London tradesman.

It was, Robert Grimshaw was thinking, very hard upon Pauline, too. He couldn't be absolutely certain what she meant to do in case the General Election came before Dudley could make some sort of appearance in the neighbourhood of Cove Park. In the conversations that

he had had with her they had taken it for tacitly understood that he was to be well—or at least that he was to be well enough for Pauline to run him herself.

But supposing it was to be a matter of some years, or even of some months? What was Pauline thinking of when she thought of the General Election that hung over them? Mustn't it add to her suspense? And he wondered what she meant to do. Would she simply stick Leicester in bed and give it out that he had a temporary illness, and run the election off her own bat? She had already run Leicester down in their car all over the country roads, going dead slow and smiling at the cottagers. And there wasn't much chance of the other side putting up a candidate. . . .

Between his feet Peter was uttering little bubbles of dissatisfaction whenever Sir William spoke, as if his harsh voice caused the small dog the most acute nervous tension. Grimshaw whistled in a whisper to keep the animal quiet. "All these details," Grimshaw thought, Pauline had all these details to attend to, an incessant vigilance, a fierce determination to keep her end up, and to do it in silence and

loneliness. He imagined her to be quivering with anxiety, to be filled with fear. He *knew* her to be all this. But Sir William, having ceased to impart his social information, turned his brows upon his patient, and Pauline came from the back room to sit down opposite him by the fireplace. And all she had to say was : "These coals really are very poor !"

Silence and loneliness. In the long grass, engrossed, mere small spots of black, the starlings in a little company went about their task. From beneath the high trees came the call of the blackbirds echoing in true wood-notes, and overhead a wood-pigeon was crooning incessantly. The path ran broad down the avenue. The sounds of the wood-cutters at work upon the trees felled that winter were sharp points in the low rumble from a distance, and over all the grass that could be seen beneath the tree-trunks there hung a light-blue haze.

Having an unlit cigarette between his fingers Grimshaw felt in his pocket for his matchbox, but for the first time in many years the excellent Jervis had forgotten to fill it. And

this in his silence and his loneliness was an additional slight irritant. There was undoubtedly a nostalgia, a restlessness in his blood, and it was to satisfy this restless desire for change of scene that he had come from his own end of the Park into Kensington Gardens. Peter was roaming unostentatiously upon his private affairs, and upon his seat Grimshaw leaned forward and looked at the ground. He had been sitting like that for a long time quite motionless when he heard the words: "You will not, I think, object to my sharing your seat? I have a slight fit of dizziness." He turned his head to one side and looked up. With a very long, square and carefully tended grey beard, with very long and oiled locks, with a very chiselled nose, high dark brows and complexion as of marble, and upon his head a black cylindrical hat, wearing a long black cassock that showed in its folds the great beads of a wooden rosary, an Orthodox priest was towering over him. Robert Grimshaw murmured: "Assuredly not, Father," in Greek, and silently the priest sat down at the other end of the bench. His face expressed aloofness, severity, and a distant pride that separated him from all

the rest of the world. He, too, sat silent for a very long time, his eyes gazing down through the trees over the Serpentine and into immense distances. Robert Grimshaw looked distastefully at the unlit cigarette which he held between his fingers, and then he observed before him a man who might have been fifty, with watery blue eyes and a red nose, his clothes and hat all a mossy green with age and between his lips a misformed cigarette.

"You haven't got a light?" Grimshaw said, and the man fumbled in his pocket, producing a greasy, blue box which he pushed open to exhibit its emptiness.

"Oh, well, give me a light from your cigarette," Grimshaw said.

A hesitancy came over the man's whole being, but reluctantly he surrendered the feeble vapour tube. Grimshaw took his light.

"Oh, here," he said, and he drew out his bulky case, "that your last? Here, take one of mine," and he shook his case over the extended palm. The cigarettes fell into it in a little shower.

"That 'll keep you going for a bit. Thanks,

it's nothing. I'm only obliged to you for the light. I wanted it."

"Ah, you do want it when you do, guv'nor," the man said. Then he walked off, lifting his feet a little higher, with a little colour in his cheeks and his back more erect.

"Poor devil!" Grimshaw said, half to himself.

"Surely," the priest said beside him in fluting and lofty tones, "are we not all poor devils in the sight of the Ruler of Ages?"

Robert Grimshaw minutely bowed his head.

"Your dizziness has left you, Father?" he asked. "It is the long fasting. I was on the watch for you to fall."

"You speak Greek," the priest said, "and are acquainted with the practices of the Church?" It was then just the end of Lent, for Easter fell very late that year.

"My mother was a Lascarides and I have many interests in Greece," Grimshaw answered.

"Ah! the Lascarides were very faithful," the priest said. "It was they in the main who helped us to build the church here."

"The church can't be much more than a stone's-throw from here. I was wondering what brought you."

"I am glad you are Greek," the Father said, "for I think it was a very good charity you did just now, and you spoke to that man like a brother, which is not what the best of these English can do."

"Oh, come!" Grimshaw said, "the English have their virtues."

The priest bowed his head in courtesy.

"It is one of their traditions," Robert Grimshaw said, "to give tobacco instead of pence to beggars. It is less demoralizing."

Again the priest bowed.

"Precisely so," he said. "It is less demoralizing. It gives less pleasure. I imagine that when the English blest spirit descends from heaven once a year to the place of torment, he will bear a drop of water to place upon the sufferer's tongue. It will be less demoralizing than the drop of healing oil that you and I will bear. Also, it will teach the poor soul to know its place. . . . Tell me, my son," he added suddenly, "do we not, you and I, feel lonely in this place?"

"Well, it is a very good place," Robert Grimshaw said. "I think it is the best place in the world."

“*Eemeision !*” the priest said. “I do not say that it is not. And in that is shown the truth of the saying: ‘How evil are the good places of this world !’”

“Assuredly you have fasted long, Father,” Grimshaw said.

“To a demoralizing degree!” the priest answered ironically. “And let us consider where that leads us. If we have fasted long, we have given ourselves to the angelic hosts. We have given our very substance to these sweet beggars. So we have demoralized the poor of heaven by the alms of our bodies.”

“Surely,” Robert Grimshaw said, “if we overburden our bodies with fasting, we demoralize the image of our Creator and Saviour?”

“Not so!” the priest thundered suddenly, and his eyes blazed far back in his skull. “We have mortified this our body which is from the devil, and in the lowness of the tides of this life we see the truth. For I tell you that when we see this place to be lonely, then, indeed, we see the truth, and when we say that it is pleasant, we lie foully.”

“Then, indeed,” Robert Grimshaw said, “we

—I mean you and I—are to be creatures of two natures. We shall follow our passions—if they be passions of well-doing—till they lead us, as always they must, into evil.”

“And,” the priest assented, “we must purge then from us that satisfaction of well-doing and well-being by abstentions and by fastings, and by thinking of the things that are not of this world.”

“It is strange,” Robert Grimshaw said, “to hear your conversation. I have heard so little of these things since I was a very young man. But you teach me now as my aunt and foster-mother taught me at her knee. She was Mrs. Peter Lascarides.”

“I knew her,” the priest said. “She was a very good woman. You could not have had a better teacher.”

“And yet,” Robert Grimshaw said, “it was from her teaching that I have evolved what has been the guiding phrase of my life: ‘Do what you want and take what you get for it.’”

“And God in His mercy pardon the ill we do.” The priest crossed himself.

“I had forgotten that,” Grimshaw said, and

he added gravely : " God in His mercy pardon the ill I have done."

" May it be pardoned to you," the priest said. He stopped for a moment to let the prayer ascend to Heaven. Then he added didactically : " With that addition your motto is a very good one ; for, with a good training, a man should have few evil instincts. And to do what you want, unless obviously it is evil, is to follow the dictates of the instincts that God has placed in you. Thus, if you will feast, feast ; if you will fast, fast ; if you will be charitable to your neighbour, pour out your goods into the outstretched hands of the poor. Then, if you chance to give three scudi into the hands of a robber, and with these three scudi he purchase a knife wherewith he slay his brother, God may well pardon it to you, who hung, omnipotent, upon the Cross, though thereby to Cæsar was left power to oppress many of the Churches."

" So that we should not think too much of the effects of our deeds ?" Robert Grimshaw asked.

" Not too much," the priest said. " For then we shall lose much Christian charity. I know

a lady who resides near our church and is noted for a frosty sort of charity, going with tracts into the poorer regions. I have heard that she said once to her niece: ‘My dear, never keep a diary; it may be used against you!’” The priest pronounced these words with a singular mixture of laughter and contempt. “Do you not hear all England speaking in these words?” he asked suddenly.

A nurse, tall, pink and white, with a dove-coloured veil and cloak, passed them, with averted face, pushing in a low cart a child, whose blue eyes gazed with contentment upon the tree-tops.

“Well, hasn’t it given us that?” Grimshaw said.

“Yes, it has given that to the world,” the priest said. “A menial who averts her eyes—a child who is inanimate by force of being kept ‘good’—a ‘good’ child. My son, a ‘good’ child is a thing to make the angels cry; for is it not recorded of our Comforter that once He struck His mother?”

“But should not the nursemaid avert her eyes?” Grimshaw said.

“Consider,” the black pope answered, “with what a laughing glance she would have passed you had she been a Cypriote ; or how she would have gazed till her eyes started from her head at an English Bishop. But as for this girl, she averts her gaze. Her aunt has told her that it might be used against her.”

“It might be used against her, you know,” Grimshaw said.

“Oh, my son,” the priest said, “for what has God given a maiden eyes, save to use them in innocent glances ? And what use is the teaching of our Church if passer-by may not smile upon passer-by and pass the time of day by well-heads and in the shady groves ? It may be used against them. But tell me this, my son : Are there not four times more fallen women and brothels in one-half of this city than in all Greece and Cyprus and the Isles ?”

“Yet there there is not one such nursemaid,” Grimshaw said. “And it is that that our civilization has bent all its energies to produce. That, without doubt, is why you and I are

lonely here." He added: "But is it not wiser to strive to produce nursemaids?"

"Son," the priest asked, "will you not come with me and confess your troubles? For I am very certain that you have troubles. You have, is it not, done what you wanted; you are now, therefore, taking what you get for it? I have heard you say, may God pardon the ill you have done! It is not that you regret having rained your cigarettes upon that poor man?"

"Ah, I regret that less than other things," Grimshaw said.

"Because you asked him first for the service of a light?"

"Why," Grimshaw answered, "in this case I had really need of a light. But I confess that quite often I have asked poor men for lights when I had my own, that I might give them a taste of good tobacco."

"And why did you first ask them for a light?" the priest asked. "Was it that they might not be demoralized?"

"I hardly know," Grimshaw said. "I think it was to get into touch with them—to precede the pleasure of the tobacco with the pleasure

of having done me a service. One doesn't inquire so closely into one's motives."

"Ah," the black pope answered, "from that alone one may perceive that you are not English, for the English do not, like you, seek to come into contact with their fellow-beings or with persons whom they may meet by chance. They are always afraid of entanglements—that it may be used against them."

Robert Grimshaw leaned forward over his stick. It was pleasant to him to come into contact with this representative of an unseen world—to come for a moment out of the ring, very visible and circumscribed, in which he moved. It gave him, as it were, a chance to stand upon a little hill and look down into the misty "affair" in which he was so deeply engaged.

"Then you don't advise me," he said suddenly in English, "to pull up my sticks—to wash my hands of things and people and affections?"

"Assuredly," the priest said, "I do not advise you to give away your little dog for fear that one day it will die and rend your heart."

Grimshaw looked meditatively at Peter, who was flapping through the grass, his nose tracking some delicious odour beyond the path just opposite them.

"I certainly will not give away my little dog," Grimshaw said.

He meditated for a little longer, then he stood up, straightening himself, with his stick behind his back.

"I know I may not offer you my arm," he said, "to take you back to your church."

The priest smiled gently.

"That is forbidden to you," he said, "for it would militate against the dignity of my appearance ; but all other human contacts lie open to you. Cherish them." The haughty curve of his brows became militant ; his voice took on the tone of a challenger. "Go out into the world ; help all that you may ; induce all that you may to go into the right paths. Bring one unto the other, that mutual comprehension may result. That is the way of Christian fellowship ; that is the way to bring about the peace of God on earth."

"And pray God to forgive any ill that I may do," Grimshaw answered.

“That, too,” the priest answered ; and, tall, haughty, his brows very arched, his hair curled and his beard tended, he moved slowly away towards the gates, casting looks, apparently of indignation, at the chestnut-blossoms of the avenue.

III

THAT night Robert Grimshaw dined at the Langhams'. Little Kitty was still at Brighton with Katya, and the room, in the pleasant shade of a hanging-lamp above the table, was tranquil and soothing. Paul Langham, who was the director of a bank doing most of its business with the Orient, was a blond gentleman with a high nose, able to pass from the soup to the coffee without speaking a word. And having that afternoon purchased at a railway bookstall an engineer's puzzle, by means of which sixteen crescents of orange-coloured cardboard could be made to fit the form of a perfect circle into a square box, Ellida was more engaged with these little coloured objects than with either of her companions.

And suddenly Mr. Held was in the room. He had the air of springing from the dark floor

into the little circle of light that the lamp cast. His black hair hung down over his ears, his great black eyes were luminous and very open, and his whole gentle being appeared to be pervaded by some deep excitement.

"I thought if you'd just come round," he said in a deep voice, with extreme embarrassment. Robert Grimshaw was already half out of his chair, but to his, "What is it?" Mr. Held replied only, "I don't know that it's anything, but I should like you just to come round."

Robert Grimshaw was in the hall and then in the street beside the figure of Mr. Held, who, with his dancing and hurrying step and his swarthy but extreme leanness, had the grotesque appearance of an untried tragic actor. It wasn't that Dudley was any worse, he said, and it wasn't—no, certainly it wasn't, that he'd made any attack upon Pauline. It was simply that he would like Mr. Grimshaw just to come round.

In the drawing-room in Curzon Street Pauline was sitting chafing Dudley Leicester's hands between her own, and Robert Grimshaw never quite understood what it was that

had led the young man to call him in. By cross-questioning him a great deal later he discovered that young Mr. Held had conceived a mournful but enormous tenderness for Pauline. It was, indeed, enough to see how from a distance his enormous eyes pored like a spaniel's over her tiny figure, or to see how, like a sprinter starting to make a record, he would spring from one end of the drawing-room to fetch her a footstool before she could even select a chair upon which to sit down. It couldn't be said that he did not brood over Dudley Leicester with efficiency and attention, for that obviously was one of the services he rendered her. But the whole of his enthusiasm went into his attempts to foresee what in little things Pauline would be wanting. And, as he explained later to Robert Grimshaw, that day he had felt—he had felt it in his bones, in his soul—that Pauline was approaching a crisis, a breakdown of her personality. It wasn't anything she had done ; perhaps it was rather what she hadn't, for she had sat that whole afternoon holding Leicester's hand, rubbing it between her own, without speaking, looking straight in front of her. And suddenly he had

a feeling—he couldn't explain it. Perhaps, he said, Christian Science had had something to do with it—helped him to be telepathic.

But, sitting as she always did, perched on the arm of the chair where Leicester sprawled, Pauline simply turned her head to the door at Grimshaw's entry.

"This doctor's no good," she said, "and the man he's called in in consultation's no good. What's to be done?"

And then, like Mr. Held himself, Robert Grimshaw had a "feeling." Perhaps it was the coldness of her voice. That day Sir William Wells had called in a confrère, a gentleman with red hair and an air of extreme deafness; and, wagging his glasses at his friend, Sir William had shouted:

"What d'you say to light baths? *Heh?* What d'you say to zymotic massage? *Heh?*" whilst his friend had looked at Dudley with a helpless gaze, dropping down once or twice to feel Leicester's pulse, and once to press his eyeball. But he did not utter a word, and to Grimshaw, too, the spectacle of these two men standing over the third—Sir William well back on his heels, his friend slouched forward

—had given him a sudden feeling of revulsion. They appeared like vultures. He understood now that Pauline, too, had had the same feeling.

“No, they don’t seem much good,” he said.

She uttered, with a sudden fierceness, the words :

“Then it’s up to you to do what’s to be done.”

Robert Grimshaw recoiled a minute step.

“Oh, I don’t mean,” she said, “because it’s your fault, but simply—I can’t think any more. It’s too lonely, yet I can’t talk about it. I can’t.”

Mr. Held, his mouth wide open with agony, glided out of the room, squeezing his ascetic hands together.

“But . . .” Robert Grimshaw said.

“Oh, I know,” she answered. “I *did* talk to you about it. But it does not somehow seem to be right any more. Don’t you understand? Not only because it isn’t delicate or it doesn’t seem the right thing to talk about one’s relations with one’s husband, but simply . . . I can’t. I can keep things going; I can run the house and keep it all dark. . . . But

is he going to get well, or isn't he? We know nothing. And I can't face the question alone. I can *do* things. It drives me mad to have to think about them. And I've no one to talk to, not a relation, not a soul in the world."

"You aren't angry with me?" Grimshaw asked.

"Angry!" she answered, with almost a touch of contempt in her voice. "Good heavens! I'd dust your shoes for all you've done for us, and for all you're doing. But you've got to do more. You've got to do much more. And you have to do it alone."

"But . . ." Robert Grimshaw said.

Pauline remained silent. She began again to chafe Dudley Leicester's hands between her little palms. Suddenly she looked hard at Grimshaw.

"Don't you understand?" she said. "I do, if you don't, see where we're coming to." His face expressed a forced want of comprehension, as if he were afraid. She looked remorselessly into his eyes.

"It's no use hiding our heads in the sand,"

she said, and then she added in cold and precise words :

“ You’re in love with me and I’m in love with you. We’re drifting, drifting. But I’m not the woman to drift. I mean to do what’s right, and I mean to make you. There’s no more to be said.”

Robert Grimshaw walked to the farthest end of the tall room. He remained for a long time with his face to the corner. He attempted no denial. He could not deny, and once again he seemed older. His voice was even a little husky when, looking at her feet, he said :

“ I can’t think what’s to be done,” and, in a very low voice, he added, “ unless . . .” She looked at him with her lips parted, and he uttered the one word : “ Katya !” Her hand went up over her heart.

And he remembered how she had said that her mother always looked most characteristic when she sat, with her hand over her heart, erect, listening for the storms in the distance. And suddenly her voice appeared to be one issuing from a figure of stone :

“ Yes, that is it ! She was indicated from

the first ; we ought to have asked her from the first. That came into my head this afternoon."

"We couldn't have done better than we have," he said. "We didn't know how. We haven't been letting time slip."

She nodded her head slowly.

"We *have* been letting time slip. I knew it when I saw these two over Dudley this afternoon. I lost suddenly all faith in Sir William. It went out of me like water out of a glass, and I saw at once that we had been letting time slip."

Grimshaw said : "*Oh !*"

But with her little air of sad obstinacy she continued :

"If we hadn't, we should have seen from the first that that man was a cold fool. You see it the moment you look for it. Yes, get Miss Lascarides ! That's what you've got to do."

And when Robert Grimshaw held out his hand to her she raised her own with a little gesture of abstention.

"Go to-night and ask Ellida if she will lend us her sister, to put us all straight."

Eating the end of his meal—which he had begun at the Langhams’—with young Held alone in the dining-room, Robert Grimshaw said :

“ We’re going to call Miss Lascarides to the rescue.”

The lean boy’s dark eyes lit up with a huge delight.

“ How exactly the right thing !” he exclaimed. “ I’ve heard of her. She’s a great professional reputation. You wouldn’t think there was a whole world of us talking about each other, but there is, and you couldn’t do better. How did you come to hear of her ?” And then his face fell. “ Of course it means my going out of it,” he said.

Robert Grimshaw let his commiserating glance rest on the young man’s open countenance, over which every emotion passed as openly and as visibly as gusts of wind pass over still waters. Suddenly an expression of timid appeal came into the swarthy face.

“ I should like you to let me say,” the boy brought out, “ how much I appreciate the way you’ve all treated me. I mean, you know, exactly as an equal. For instance, *you* talked

to me just as if I were anybody else. And Mrs. Leicester !”

“ Well, you are like anybody else, aren’t you ?” Robert Grimshaw said.

“ Of course, too,” Held said, “ it ’ll be such a tremendous thing for her to have a woman to confide in. She does need it. I can feel that she needs it. Oh, as for me, of course I took a first in classics, but what’s the good of that when you aren’t any mortal use in the world ? I might be somebody’s secretary, but I don’t know how those jobs are got. I never had any influence. My father was only Vicar of Melkham. The only thing I could do would be to be a Healer. I’ve so much faith that I am sure I could do it with good conscience, whereas I don’t think I’ve been doing this quite conscientiously. I mean I don’t think that I ever believed I could be much good.”

Robert Grimshaw said : “ Ah !”

“ If there’d been anything to report to Sir William, I could have reported it, for I am very observant, but there was nothing. There’s been absolutely nothing. Or if there’d been any fear of violence—Sir William always selects me for cases of intermittent violence.”

Again Robert Grimshaw said: "Ah!" and his eyes went over Mr. Held's form.

"You see," Held continued, "I'm so immensely strong. I held the amateur belt for wrestling for three years, Græco-Roman style. I expect I could hold it still if I kept in training. But wasn't I right when I said that Mrs. Leicester had some sort of psychological revulsion this afternoon?" He spoke the words pleadingly, and added in an almost inaudible voice: "You don't mind my asking? It isn't an impertinence? It means such an immense amount to me."

"Yes, I think perhaps you're right," Grimshaw said. "Something of the sort must have occurred."

"I felt it," Held continued, speaking very quickly; "I felt it inwardly. Isn't it wonderful, these waves that come out from people one's keenly sympathetic to? Quite suddenly it came; about an hour after Sir William had gone. She was sitting on the arm of Mr. Leicester's chair and I felt it."

"But wasn't it because her face fell—something like that?" Robert Grimshaw asked.

"Oh no, oh no," Held said; "I had my back to her. I was looking out of the window. To tell the truth, I can't bear to look at her when she sits like that beside him; it's so . . ."

A spasm of agony passed over Mr. Held's face and he swallowed painfully. And then he continued, his face lighting up:

"Why it's such a tremendous thing to me is that it means I can go forward; I can go on to be a Healer without any conscientious doubts as to my capacities. If I felt this mentality so much, I can feel it in other cases, so that really it means life and death to me; because this sort of thing, if it's very good study, doesn't mean any more than being a male nurse, so that I've gained immensely, even if I do go out of the house. You don't know what it's meant to me to be in contact with your two natures. My mentality has drawn its strength, light; I'm a different person from what I was six weeks ago."

"Oh, come!" Robert Grimshaw said.

"Oh, it's true," Mr. Held answered. "In the last place I was in I had to have meals with the butler, and here you've been good,

and I've made this discovery, that my mentality *will* synchronize with another person's if I'm much in sympathy with them." And then he asked anxiously: "Mrs. Leicester wasn't very bad?"

"Oh no," Robert Grimshaw answered, "it was only that she had come to the resolution of calling in Miss Lascarides."

"Now, I should have thought it was more than that," Held said. "I was almost certain that it was something very bitter and unpleasant. One of those thoughts that seem suddenly to wreck one's whole life."

"Oh, I don't think it was more than that," Robert Grimshaw said; and Mr. Held went on to declare at ecstatic lengths how splendid it would be for Pauline to have Katya in the house, to have someone to confide in, to unbosom herself to, to strengthen her mentality with, and from whom to receive—he was sure she would receive it, since Miss Lascarides was Mrs. Langham's sister—to receive a deep and clinging affection. Besides, Miss Lascarides having worked in the United States, was certain to have imbibed some of Mrs. Eddy's doctrine, so that, except for Mr. Leicester's

state, it was, Mr. Held thought, going to be an atmosphere of pure joy in the house. Mrs. Leicester so needed a sister.

Robert Grimshaw sipped his coffee in a rather grim silence. "I wish you'd get me the 'ABC,' or look up the trains for Brighton," he said.

IV

“ HERE comes mother and the bad man,” Kitty said from the top of her donkey, and there sure enough to meet them, as they were returning desultorily to lunch along the cliff-top, came Ellida Langham and Robert Grimshaw. Ellida at the best of times was not much of a pedestrian, and the donkey, for all it was large and very nearly white, moved with an engrossed stubbornness that, even when she pulled it, Katya found it difficult to change. On this occasion, however, she did not even pull it, and the slowness of their mutual approach across the green grass high up in the air had the effect of the coming together of two combatant but reluctant forces.

“ He’s a bad, bad man,” little Kitty said.

“ And he’s a bad, bad man,” Katya answered her.

At her last parting it had been agreed

between them that they parted for good, or at least until Robert Grimshaw would give in to her stipulation. He had said that this would not be until he had grown very, very tired ; and Katya felt it, like Mr. Held, in her bones that Robert Grimshaw had not come now to submit to her. They approached, however, in weather that was very bright, over the short turf beneath dazzling seagulls overhead against the blue sky. And, Katya having stood aside cool and decided in her grey dress, Ellida, dressed as she always was in a loose black, flung herself upon the child. But, having showered as many kisses and endearments as for the moment she needed, she took the donkey by the bridle as a sign that she herself took charge of that particular portion of the enterprise.

“ You’ve got,” she said to her sister, “ to go a walk with Toto. I’ll take this thing home.”

Katya gave Robert a keen scrutiny whilst she said to Ellida :

“ You’ll never get it home. It will pull the arms out of your body.”

“ Well, I’ll admit,” Ellida said, a little disconsolately, “ that I never expected to turn into a donkey-boy, but ”—and she suddenly

grew more brisk—"it's got to be done. You remember that you're only my nursemaid."

"That doesn't," Katya said amiably, "give you the right to dispose of me when it comes to followers."

"Oh, get along, you cantankerous cat." Ellida laughed at her. "The gentleman isn't here as a follower. He's heard I've given you notice, and he's taken up your character. He thinks you'll do. He wants to employ you."

Katya uttered "Oh," with minute displeasure, and a little colour came into her clear cheeks. She turned her profile towards them, and against the blue sky it was like an extraordinary cameo, so clear, so pale, the dark eyelashes so exact, the jet-black hair receiving only in its coils the reflection of the large, white, linen hat that Katya wore because she was careful of her complexion and her eyes and her whole face had that air of distant and inscrutable determination that goes with the aspect of a divinity like Diana.

"In fact, it's only a matter of terms," Robert Grimshaw said, looking away down the long slopes of the downs inland.

"Everything is always a matter of terms," Katya said.

The white donkey was placidly browsing the short grass and the daisy heads.

"Oh, come up," Ellida said, and eventually the white beast responded to her exertions. It wasn't, however, until the donkey was well out of earshot that Grimshaw broke the silence that Katya seemed determined to maintain. He pointed with his stick to where—a dark patch of trees dominated by a squarish, dark tower, in the very bottom of a fold in the downs—a hamlet occupied the extreme distance.

"I want to walk to there," he said.

"I'm not at all certain that I want to walk at all," she answered, and he retorted:

"Oh yes, you do. Look how the weathercock shines in the sun. You know how, when we were children, we always wanted to walk to where the weathercock shone, and there was always something to prevent it. Now we're grown up, we're going to do it."

"Ah, it's different now," she answered. "When we were children we expected to find something under the shining weathercocks."

Now there's nothing in the world that we can want to find. It seems as if we'd got all that we're ever going to get."

"Still, you don't know what we mightn't find under there," he said.

She looked straight into his clear olive-coloured face. She noted that his eyes were dark and tired.

"Oh, poor dear!" she said to herself, and then she uttered aloud: "Now, look here, Toto, it's understood once and for all that I'm ready to live with you to-day. But I won't marry you. If I go with you now, there's to be no more talking about that."

"Oh, that's understood," he said.

"Well, then," she replied, and she unfolded her white sunshade, "let's go and see what we find beneath the weathercock;" and she put her hand on his arm.

They strolled slowly down the turf. She was used enough to his method of waiting, as if for the psychological moment, to begin a conversation of importance, and for quite a long way they talked gaily and pleasantly of the little herbs of which, as they got farther inland, they discovered their carpet to be composed—

the little mints, the little yellow blossoms, the tiny, silvery leaves like ferns—and the quiet and the thrilling of the innumerable larks. The wind seemed to move low down and cool about their feet.

And she said that he didn't know what it meant to her to be back—just in the quiet.

“Over there,” she said, “it did seem to be rather dreadful—rather comfortless, and even a little useless. It wasn't that they hadn't got the things. Why, there are bits in Philadelphia and bits round Philadelphia—old bits and old families and old people. There are even grass and flowers and shade. But somehow, what was dreadful, what made it so lonely, was that they didn't know what they were there for. It was as if no one knew—what he was there for. I don't know.”

She stopped for a minute.

“I don't know,” she said—“I don't know how to express it. Over here things seem to fit in, if it's only a history that they fit into. They go on. But over there one went on patching up people—we patched them up by the score, by the hundred. And then they

went and did it all over again, and it seemed as if we only did it for the purpose of letting them go and do it all over again. It was as if instead of preparing them for life we merely prepared them for new breakdowns."

"Well, I suppose life *isn't* very well worth living over there?" Grimshaw asked.

"Oh, it isn't the life," she said. "The *life's* worth living—more worth living than it is here. . . . But there's something more than mere life. There's—you might call it the overtone of life—the something that's more than the mere living. It's the what gives softness to our existence that they haven't got. It's the . . . That's it! It's knowing one's place; it's feeling that one's part of a tradition, a link in the chain. And oh . . . " she burst out, "I didn't want to talk about it. But it used to come over me like a fearful doubt—the thought that I, too, might be growing into a creature without a place. That's why it's heaven to be back," she ended. She looked down the valley with her eyes half closed, she leant a little on his arm. "It's heaven, heaven!" she repeated in a whisper.

"You were afraid," he said, "that we

shouldn't keep a place for you—Ellida, and I, and all of us?"

"Perhaps that was all it was," she dropped her voice to say. He pressed with his arm her hand against his heart.

"Oh," he said, "it isn't only the old place we want you to go into. There's a new one. You've heard that I've been taking up your character?"

"Ah," she said; and again she was on the alert in an instant. "I'm to have a situation with you? Who's the invalid? Peter?" The little dog with the flapping ears was running wide on the turf, scenting the unaccustomed grasses.

"Oh, Peter's as near speaking as he can ever get," Grimshaw said.

Katya laughed.

"That would be a solution," she said, "if you took me on as Peter's nurse. But who's your dumb child now? I suppose it's your friend . . . ah! . . . Dudley Leicester."

"You remember," Grimshaw said, "you used always to say he *was* like Peter."

"No; it was you I used to say were like Peter. Well, what's the matter with Dudley

Leicester? . . . at least. No. Don't tell me. I've heard a good deal from Ellida. She's gone clean mad about his wife."

"Yes; she's mad enough about Pauline," Grimshaw said, "and so would you be."

"I dare say," she answered. "She seems brave. That's always a good deal."

"Oh, if you want braveness!" Grimshaw said. "But how can you consider his case if you won't hear about him?"

"I've had *one* version," she said. "I don't want two. It would obscure my view. What we know is that he sits about speechless, and that he asks strangers in the street a question about a telephone. That's right, isn't it?"

"What an admirable professional manner you've got!" Grimshaw said; and he disengaged her hand from his arm to look better at her. "It's quite right about poor Dudley."

"Well," she said, "don't be silly for a moment. This is my work in life—you know you don't look over-well yourself—but answer me one question. I'm content to take Ellida's version about him, because she can't influence my views. *You* might. And one wants to look only from personal observation. But . . ."

She stretched out her hand and felt his pulse for a light minute.

"You aren't well," she said. "No, I don't want to look at your tongue. Here, take off your cap;" and suddenly she ran her fingers smoothly and firmly over his temples, so that they seemed to explore deep places, cool and restful. "That soothes you, doesn't it?" she said. "*That's* how I make my bread. But take care, dear thing, or it'll be you that I shall be nursing next."

"It lies with you to cure it," he answered.

She uttered a painful "*Oh!*" and looked down the valley between her gloved fingers. When she took her hands down from her face, she said:

"Look here! That's not fair. You promised not to."

He answered: "But how can I help it? How can I help it?"

She seemed to make her head grow rigid.

"One thing at a time, then," she said. "You know everything. What happened to him at the telephone?" And when he said that someone—when he was in a place where he ought not to have been—had recognized his

voice, she said: "Oh!" and then again, "*Oh!* that explains."

Grimshaw looked at her, his dark eyes imploring.

"It can be cured?" he said.

"It ought to be," she answered. "It depends. I'll look at him."

"Oh, you *must*," he answered.

"Well, I will," she retorted. "But, you understand, I must be paid my fee."

"Oh," he said, "don't rub it in just now."

"Well, you rubbed it in just now," she mocked him. "You tried to get round my sympathies. I've got to harden myself to get back to where I was. You know you shook me. But I'm a lonely woman. My work's all I've got."

"Katya!" he said. "You know your half of your father's money is waiting for you. I've not spent a penny of it."

"I know you're a dear," she said, "but it doesn't alter matters. I won't take money from a man who won't make a sacrifice for me."

"Ellida took her share," he said.

"Ellida's Ellida," she answered. "She's a

darling, but she's not me. If you'd take the steps you might, you could have me, and I'd have father's money. But that's all there is to it. I'll do all I can for Dudley Leicester. Don't let's talk about the other thing."

They came down to the hard road over the bank.

"Now we shall see what's under the weather-cock," she said.

V

IT was as if in the churchyard, amongst the old and slanting tombs, in the sunlight and in the extended fingers of the yews, there was the peace of God. In the highroad, as it passed through the little hamlet, not a single person stirred. The cottage doors stood open, and as they had passed they could hear even the ticking of the clocks. The dust on the highroad was stamped into little patterns by the feet of a flock of sheep that, from the hill above, they had seen progressing slowly at a great distance.

“The peace of God,” Robert Grimshaw said.

They were sitting in the small plastered porch of the little old church.

“‘The peace of God, which passeth all understanding. . . .’ I’ve always thought that those words, coming where they do, are the most beautiful thing in any rite. It’s like . . .”

He seemed to be about to enter on a long train of thought, but suddenly he said, "Oh, my dear," and he laid his head on her shoulder, his eyes closed, and the lines of his face drooping. They sat silent for a long time, and slowly into hers there came an expression of a deep and restful tenderness, a minute softening of all the lines and angles of his chiselled countenance; and at last he said, very low: "Oh, you must end it!" and she answered in an echo of his tone: "No, no. Don't ask me. It isn't fair;" and she knew that if she looked at his tired face again, or if again his voice sounded so weary, that she would surrender to his terms.

He answered: "Oh, I'm not asking that. I promised that I wouldn't, and I'm not. It's the other thing that you must end. You don't know what it means to me."

She said: "What?" with an expression of bewilderment, a queer numb expression, and whilst he brought out in slow and rather broken phrases, "It's an unending strain . . . And I feel I am responsible . . . It goes on night and day . . . I can't sleep . . . I can't eat . . . I have got the conviction that suddenly

he might grow violent and murder . . .” Her face was hardening all the while. It grew whiter and her eyes darkened.

“You’re talking of Dudley Leicester?” she said, and slowly she removed her arm from beneath his hand. She stood up in front of him, clear and cool in her grey dress, and he recovered his mastery of himself.

“But, of course,” he went on, “that’s only a sort of nightmare, and you’re going to put an end to it. If we start back now you could see him to-night.”

She put her hands behind her back, and said with a distinct and clear enunciation: “I am not going to.” He looked at her without much comprehension.

“Well, to - morrow, then. Next week. Soon?”

“I am not going to at all,” she brought out still more hardly. “Not to-day. Not this week. Not ever.” And before his bewilderment she began to speak with a passionate scorn: “This is what I was to discover beneath the weathercock! Do you consider what a ridiculous figure you cut? You bring me here to talk about that man. What’s he

to you, or you to him? Why should you maunder and moon and worry about him?"

"But . . ." Robert Grimshaw said, and she burst into a hard laugh.

"No wonder you can't give in to me if you've got to be thinking of him all the time. Well, put it how you will, I have done with him, and I've done with you. Go your own idiotic ways together. I've done with you." And with her hands stretched down in front of her she snapped the handle of her parasol, her face drawn and white. She looked down at the two pieces contemptuously, and threw them against the iron-bolted, oak church door. "That's an end of it," she said.

Grimshaw looked up at her, with his jaw dropping in amazement.

"But you're jealous!" he said.

She kept herself calm for a minute longer.

"I'm sorry," she said—"I'm sorry for his poor little wife. I'm sorry for Ellida, who wants him cured, but it's their fault for having to do with such a soft, meddlesome creature as you." And then suddenly she burst out into a full torrent: "Jealous!" she said. "Yes, I'm jealous. Is that news to you? It

isn't to me. That's the secret of the whole thing, if you come to think of it. Now that it's all over between us there's no reason why you shouldn't know it. All my life you've tortured me. When I was a tiny child it was the same. I wanted you altogether, body and soul, and you had always someone like that, that you took an interest in ; that you were always trying to get *me* to take an interest in. Just you think the matter out. It 'll make you understand a good many things." She broke off, and then she began again : "Jealous ? Yes, if it 's jealousy to want a woman's right—the whole of a man altogether." She closed her eyes and stood for a moment shuddering. "Good-bye," she said ; and with an extreme stiffness she went down the short path. As she turned to go through the gate she called back : "You'd better try Morley Bishop."

Grimshaw rose to his feet as if to follow her, but an extreme weariness had overcome him. He picked up the pieces of her parasol, and with a slow and halting gait went along the dusty road towards the village inn.

A little later he took from the nearest

station the train up to London, but the intolerable solitude of the slow journey, the thought of Pauline's despair, the whole weight of depression, of circumstance, made him, on arriving at London Bridge, get out and cross the platform to the down-train time-tables. He was going to return to Brighton.

Ellida was sitting in the hotel room about eleven, reading a novel that concerned itself with the Court life of a country called "Nolhynia." She looked up at Robert Grimshaw, and said :

"Well, what have you two been up to?"

"Hasn't Katya told you?"

Ellida, luxuriating at last in the sole possession of her little Kitty, who by now prattled distractingly; luxuriating, too, in the possession of many solid hours of a night of peace, stolen unexpectedly and unavoidably from the duties of a London career, was really and paganly sprawling in a very deep chair.

"No," she said. "Katya hasn't told me anything. Where *is* Katya? I thought you'd decided to go off together at last, and leave poor little Pauline to do the best she

could ;" and she held out, without moving more than her hand, a pink telegram form which bore the words :

"Don't worry about me. Am quite all right. See that Kitty's milk is properly metchnikoffed."

"It was sent from Victoria," she said, "so of *course* I thought you'd been and gone and done it. I didn't know whether to be glad or sorry, but I think I was mostly glad." She looked up at his anxious face curiously. "Haven't you gone and done it?" she said. "You don't mean to say you've split again?"

"We've split again," he answered. "Worse than ever before." And he added anxiously : "You don't think she'll have been doing anything rash?"

"Anything rash!" she mocked him pleasantly. "She's never in her life done anything else. But if you mean gone under a motor-bus, I can tell you this, Mr. Toto, she too jolly well means to have you to do anything of that sort. What's the matter now?"

He related as carefully as he could, and then she said : "For a couple of darlings you are the most extraordinary creatures on earth.

Katya's Katya, of course ; but why in Heaven's name you can't be reasonable it passes me to understand."

"Reasonable !" Grimshaw exclaimed.

"Well," Ellida answered, "you don't know Katya as I do. You think, I dare say, that she's a cool, manlike sort of chap. As a matter of fact, she's a mere bundle of nerves and insane obstinacies. I don't mean to say that she's not adorable. She's just the most feminine thing in the world, but what you ought to do is perfectly plain. You ought to bring her to her knees. If *you* won't give in to her—it would be the easiest thing to do—it would be just as easy to bring her to her knees."

"It would ?" Grimshaw asked.

"Yes," she said, "easy, but I dare say a bit of a bore. You go off with some other woman, and she'll be after you with hatchets and knives in ten seconds after she hears the news. That's Katya. It's Kitty, too, and I dare say it would be me if I ever had anything in the world to contrarify me."

"Oh, I'm tired out," he answered. "I told you some time ago that if I grew very, very

tired I should give in to her. Well, I've come down to tell her that, if she'll take on Dudley, she can take me on, too, on her own terms."

Ellida looked up at him with her quick and birdlike eyes.

"Well, look here, Mr. Toto," she said, "if you're going to do that, you'd better get it told to her quick. If you don't catch her on the hop before she's got time to harden into it as an obstinacy, you'll find that she'll have made it a rule of life never to speak to you again; and then there'll be nothing for it *but* you're carrying on with—oh, say Etta Hudson—until Katya gets to the daggers and knives stage."

"But where is she?" Grimshaw asked.

"Oh, well, you're a man who knows everything," she answered. "I expect she's gone to one of the six or seven of her patients that are always clamouring for her. You'd better hurry to find her, or she'll be off touring round the world before you know where you are. . . . I've always thought," she continued, "that you handled her wrongly at the beginning. If the moment she'd begun that nonsense, you'd taken

a stick to her, or dragged her off to a registry office, or contrived to pretend to be harsh and brutal, she'd have given in right at once; but she got the cranky idea into her head, and now it's hardened into sheer pride. I don't believe that she really wanted it then, after the first day or two. She only wanted to bring you to your knees. If you had given in then, she'd have backed out of it at the last moment, and you'd have had St. George's and orange-blossoms, and 'The Voice that breathed o'er Eden' all complete."

"Well, I can't bother about it any longer," Grimshaw said. "I'm done. I give in."

"Good old Toto," Ellida said. And then she dropped her voice to say: "I don't know that it's the sort of thing that a sister ought to encourage a sister doing, but if you managed not to let anyone know—and that's easy enough, considering how you've set everybody talking about your quarrels. You can just meet her at Athens, and then come back and say you've made it up suddenly, and got married at the Consulate at Scutari or Trebizond, or some old place where there isn't a Consulate, and nobody goes to—if nobody

knows about it, I don't see that I need bother much." She looked up at him and continued : "I suppose you'll think I'm immoral or whatever it is ; but, after all, there was mother, who was really the best woman in the world. Of course I know you think of the future, but when everything's said and done, I'm in the same position that your children will be, and it doesn't worry me very much. It doesn't worry Katya either, though she likes to pretend it does."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of anything at all," Grimshaw answered. "I just give in. I just want the . . . the peace of God."

She looked up at him with her eyes slightly distended and wondering.

"Are you," she said, "quite sure that you will get it? Katya is a dear, of course, but she's the determination of a tiger ; she has been play-acting from the first, and she has meant to have you since you were in your cradles together. But she's meant to have you humbled and submissive, and tied utterly hand and foot. I don't believe she ever meant not to marry you. I don't believe she means it now, but she means to make you give in to

her before she marries you. She thinks it will be the final proof of your passion for her."

"Oh, I don't know," Robert Grimshaw answered. "I don't know and I don't care. What I want is to have things settled. What does it matter whether it's for life or death?"

"And Pauline Leicester?" Mrs. Langham asked.

Robert Grimshaw made a little motion with his thumb and fingers, as if he were crumbling between them a little piece of dried earth.

VI

IN the drawing-room with the blue curtains Mr. Held was saying to Pauline Leicester : " Yes, it's just gone ten. It's too late for a telegram, but I'm sure you'll get a message somehow to say she's coming. After all, he can telephone from Brighton."

" He mayn't have succeeded," Pauline said.

" Oh, I'm sure he's succeeded," Mr. Held answered. " I feel it in my bones."

It was now the thirtieth or fortieth time that since eight o'clock he had uttered some such words, and he was going on to say : " He and she are great friends, aren't they ?" when Saunders opened the door to say that a lady wished to speak to Mrs. Leicester.

" Oh, they are great friends," Pauline answered Mr. Held. " Miss Lascarides is his cousin "; and then to Saunders : " Who is it ?"

Saunders answered that he didn't know the lady, but that she appeared to be a lady.

"What's she like?" Pauline said.

The butler answered that she was very tall, very dark, and, if he might say so, rather imperious.

Pauline's mouth opened a little. "It's not," she said—"it's not Lady Hudson?"

"Oh, it isn't Lady Hudson, mum. I know Lady Hudson very well by sight. She goes past the house every day with a borzoi."

In the dining-room, lit by a solitary light on the chimneypiece, Pauline saw a lady—very tall, very dark, and very cool and collected. They looked at each other for the shadow of a moment with the odd and veiled hostility that mysterious woman bestows upon her fellow-mystery.

"You're Pauline Leicester?" the stranger said. "You don't know who I am?"

"We've never met, I think," Pauline answered.

"And you've never seen a photograph?"

"A photograph?" Pauline said. "No; I don't think I've seen a photograph."

"Ah, you wouldn't have a photograph of me that's not a good many years' old. It was a good deal before your time."

With her head full of the possibilities of her husband's past, for she couldn't tell that there mightn't have been another, Pauline said, with her brave distinctness :

"Are you, perhaps, the person who rang up 4,259 Mayfair? If you are . . ."

The stranger's rather regal eyes opened slightly. She was leaning one arm on the chimneypiece and looking over her shoulder, but at that she turned and held out both her hands.

"Oh, my dear," she said, "it's perfectly true what he said. You're the bravest woman in the world, and I'm Katya Lascarides."

With the light full upon her face, Pauline Leicester hardly stirred.

"You've heard all about me," she said, with a touch of sadness in her voice, "from Robert Grimshaw?"

"No, from Ellida," Katya answered, "and I've seen your photograph. She carries it about with her."

Pauline Leicester said, "Ah!" very slowly.

And then, "Yes ; Ellida's very fond of me. She's very good to me."

"My dear," Katya said, "Ellida's everything in the matter. At any rate, if I'm going to do you any good, it's she that's got me here. I shouldn't have done it for Robert Grimshaw."

Pauline turned slightly pale.

"You haven't quarrelled with Robert?" she said. "I should be so sorry."

"My dear," Katya answered, "never mention his name to me again. It's only for you I'm here, because what Ellida told me has made me like you ;" and then she asked to see the patient.

Dudley Leicester, got into evening dress as he was by Saunders and Mr. Held every evening, sat, blond and healthy to all seeming, sunk in the eternal arm-chair, his fingers beating an eternal tattoo, his eyes fixed upon vacancy. His appearance was so exactly natural that it was impossible to believe he was in any "condition" at all. It was so impossible to believe it that when, with a precision that seemed to add many years to

her age, Katya Lascarides approached, and, bending over him, touched with the tips of her fingers little and definite points on his temples and brows, touching them and retouching them as if she were fingering a rounded wind-instrument, and that, when she asked: "Doesn't that make your head feel better?" it seemed merely normal that his right hand should come up from the ceaseless drumming on the arm of the chair to touch her wrist, and that plaintively his voice should say: "Much better; oh, much better!"

And Pauline and Mr. Held said simultaneously: "He isn't . . ."

"Oh, he isn't cured," Katya said. "This is only a part of the process. It's to get him to like me, to make him have confidence in me, so that I can get to know something about him. Now, go away. I can't give you any verdict till I've studied him."

PART V



I

IN the intervals of running from hotel to hotel—for Robert Grimshaw had taken it for granted that Ellida was right, and that Katya had gone either to the old hotel where she had stayed with Mrs. Van Husum, and where they knew she had left the heavier part of her belongings—Robert Grimshaw looked in to tell Pauline that he hadn't yet been able to fix things up with Katya Lascarides, but that he was certainly going to do so, and would fetch her along that afternoon. In himself he felt some doubt of how he was going to find Katya. At the Norfolk Street hotel he had heard that she had called in for two or three minutes the night before in order to change her clothes—he remembered that she was wearing her light grey dress and a linen sun-hat—and that then she had gone out, saying

that she was going to a patient's, and might or might not come back.

"This afternoon," he repeated, "I'll bring her along."

Pauline looked at his face attentively.

"Don't you know where she is?" she said incredulously, and then she added, as if with a sudden desolation: "Have you quarrelled as much as all that?"

"How did you know I don't know where she is?" Grimshaw answered swiftly. "She hasn't been attacking you?"

Her little hands fell slowly open at her sides; then she rested one of them upon the white cloth that was just being laid for lunch.

The horn of an automobile sounded rather gently outside, and the wheels of a butcher's cart rattled past.

"Oh, Robert," she said suddenly, "it wasn't about me you quarrelled? Don't you understand she's here in the house now? That was Sir William Wells who just left."

"She *hasn't* been attacking you?" Grimshaw persisted.

"Oh, she wouldn't, you know," Pauline

answered. "She isn't that sort. It's you she would attack if she attacked anybody."

"Oh, well, yes," Robert Grimshaw answered. "It was about you we quarrelled—about you and Dudley, about the household: it occupies too much of my attention. She wants me altogether."

"Then what's she here for?" Pauline said.

"I don't know," Grimshaw said. "Perhaps because she's sorry for you."

"Sorry for me!" Pauline said, "because I care. . . . But then she . . . Oh, where do we stand?"

"What has she done?" Robert Grimshaw said. "What does she say?"

"About you?" Pauline said.

"No, no—about the case?"

"Oh," Pauline said, "she says that if we can only find out who it was rang up that number it would be quite likely that we could cure him."

Grimshaw suddenly sat down.

"That means . . ." he said, and then he stopped.

Pauline said: "What? I couldn't bear to cause her any unhappiness."

"Oh," Robert Grimshaw answered, "is that the way to talk in our day and—and—and our class? We don't take things like that."

"Oh, my dear," she said painfully, "how are we taking this?" Then she added: "And in any case Katya isn't of our day or our class."

She came near, and stood over him, looking down.

NB. "Robert," she said gravely, "who is of our day and our class? Are you? Or am I? Why are your hands shaking like that, or why did I just now call you 'my dear'? We've got to face the fact that I called you 'my dear.' Then, don't you see, you can't be of our day and our class. And as for me, wasn't it really because Dudley wasn't faithful to me that I've let myself slide near you? I haven't made a scandal or any outcry about Dudley Leicester. That's our day and that's our class. But look at all the difference it's made in our personal relations! Look at the misery of it all! That's it. We can make a day and a class and rules for them, but we can't keep any

of the rules except just the gross ones like not making scandals."

"Then, what Katya's here for," Robert Grimshaw said, "is to cure Dudley. She's a most wonderful sense, and she knows that the only way to have me altogether is to cure him."

"Oh, don't put it as low down as that," Pauline said. "Just a little time ago you said that it was because she was sorry for me."

"Yes, yes," Grimshaw answered eagerly; "that's it; that's the motive. But it doesn't hinder the result from being that, when Dudley's cured, we all fly as far apart as the poles."

"Ah," she said slowly, and she looked at him with the straight, remorseless glance and spoke with the little, cold expressionless voice that made him think of her for the rest of his life as if she were the unpitying angel that barred for our first parents the return into Eden, "you see that at least! That is where we all are—flying as far apart as the poles."

Grimshaw suddenly extended both his hands in a gesture of mute agony, but she drew back both her own.

"That again," she said, "is our day and our

class. And that's the best that's to be said for us. We haven't learned wisdom: we've only learned how to behave. We cannot avoid tragedies."

She paused and repeated with a deeper note of passion than he had ever heard her allow herself:

"Tragedies! Yes, in our day and in our class we don't allow ourselves easy things like daggers and poison-bowls. It's all more difficult. It's all more difficult because it goes on and goes on. We think we've made it easier because we've slackened old ties. You're in and out of the house all day long, and I can go around with you everywhere. But just because we've slackened the old ties, just because marriage is a weaker thing than it used to be—in our day and in our class"—she repeated the words with deep bitterness and looked unflinchingly into his eyes—"we've strengthened so immensely the other kind of ties. If you'd been married to Miss Lascarides you'd probably not have been faithful to her. As it is, just because your honour's involved you find yourself tied to her as no monk ever was by his vow."

She looked down at her feet and then again at his eyes, and in her glance there was a cold stream of accusation that appeared incredible, coming from a creature so small, so fragile, and so reserved. Grimshaw stood with his head hanging forward upon his chest: the scene seemed to move with an intolerable slowness, and to him her attitude of detachment was unspeakably sad. It was as if she spoke from a great distance—as if she were a ghost fading away into dimness. He could not again raise his hands towards her: he could utter no endearments: her gesture of abnegation had been too absolute and too determined. With her eyes full upon him she said:

“You do not love Katya Lascarides: you are as cold to her as a stone. You love me, and you have ruined all our lives. But it doesn’t end, it goes on. We fly as far asunder as the poles, and it goes on for good.”

She stopped as suddenly as she had begun to speak, and what she had said was so true, and the sudden revelation of what burned beneath the surface of a creature so small and apparently so cold—the touch of fierce hunger in her voice, of pained resentment in her eyes

—these things so overwhelmed Robert Grimshaw that for a long time still he remained silent. Then suddenly he said :

“Yes; by God, it’s true what you say! I told Ellida long ago that my business in life was to wait for Katya and to see that you had a good time.” He paused, and then added quickly : “I’ve lived to see you in hell, and I’ve waited for Katya till”—he moved one of his hands in a gesture of despair—“till all the fire’s burned out,” he added suddenly.

“So that now,” she retorted with a little bitter humour, “what you’ve got to do is to give Katya a good time and go on waiting for me.”

“Till when?” he said with a sudden hot eagerness.

“Oh,” she said, “till all the ships that ever sailed come home; till all the wild-oats that were ever sown are reaped; till the sun sets in the east and the ice on the poles is all melted away. If you were the only man in all the world, my dear, I would never look at you again.”

Grimshaw looked at the ground and muttered aimlessly :

“What’s to be done? What’s to be done?”

He went on repeating this like a man stupefied beyond the power of speech and thought, until at last it was as if a minute change of light passed across the figure of Pauline Leicester—as if the softness faded out of her face, her colour and her voice, as if, having for that short interval revealed the depths of her being, she had closed in again, finally and irrevocably. So that it was with a sort of ironic and business-like crispness that she said:

“All that’s to be done is the one thing that you’ve got to do.”

“And that?” Robert Grimshaw asked.

“That is to find the man who rang up that number. You’ve got to do that because you know all about these things.”

“I?” Robert Grimshaw said desolately.

“Oh yes, I know all about these things.”

“You know,” Pauline continued, “she’s very forcible, your Katya. You should have seen how she spoke to Sir William Wells, until at last he positively roared with fury, and yet she hadn’t said a single word except, in the most respectful manner in the world, ‘Wouldn’t it

have been best the very first to discover who the man on the telephone was ? ”

“ How did she know about the man on the telephone ? ” Grimshaw said. “ You didn’t. Sir William told me not to tell you.”

“ Oh, Sir William ! ” she said, with the first contempt that he had ever heard in her voice. “ He didn’t want anybody to know anything. And when Katya told him that over there they always attempt to cure a shock of that sort by a shock almost exactly similar, he simply roared out : ‘ Theories ! theories ! theories ! ’ That was his motor that went just now.”

They were both silent for a long time, and then suddenly Robert Grimshaw said :

“ It was I that rang up 4,259 Mayfair.”

Pauline only answered : “ Ah ! ”

And looking straight at the carpet in front of him, Robert Grimshaw remembered the March night that had ever since weighed so heavily on them all. He had dined alone at his club. He had sat talking to three elderly men, and, following his custom, at a quarter past eleven he had set out to walk up Piccadilly and round the acute angle of Regent Street.

Usually he walked down Oxford Street, down Park Lane ; and so, having taken his breath of air and circumnavigated, as it were, the little island of wealth that those four streets encompass, he would lay himself tranquilly in his white bed, and with Peter on a chair beside his feet, he would fall asleep. But on that night, whilst he walked slowly, his stick behind his back, he had been almost thrown down by Etta Stackpole, who appeared to fall right under his feet, and she was followed by the tall form of Dudley Leicester, whose face Grimshaw recognized as he looked up to pay the cabman. Having, as one does on the occasion of such encounters, with a military precision and an extreme swiftness turned on his heels—having turned indeed so swiftly that his stick, which was behind his back, swung out centrifugally and lightly struck Etta Stackpole's skirt, he proceeded to walk home in a direction the reverse of his ordinary one. And at first he thought absolutely nothing at all. The night was cold and brilliant, and he peeped, as was his wont, curiously and swiftly into the faces of the passers-by. Just about abreast of Burlington House he ejaculated :

“That sly cat!” as if he were lost in surprised admiration for Dudley Leicester’s enterprise. But opposite the Ritz he began to shiver. “I must have taken a chill,” he said, but actually there had come into his mind the thought—the thought that Etta Stackpole afterwards so furiously upbraided him for—that Dudley Leicester must have been carrying on a long intrigue with Etta Stackpole. “And I’ve married Pauline to that scoundrel!” he muttered, for it seemed to him that Dudley Leicester must have been a scoundrel, if he could so play fast and loose, if he could do it so skilfully as to take in himself, whilst appearing so open about it.

And then Grimshaw shrugged his shoulders: “Well, it’s no business of mine,” he said.

He quickened his pace, and walked home to bed; but he was utterly unable to sleep.

Lying in his white bed, the sheets up to his chin, his face dark in the blaze of light from above his head—the only dark object, indeed, in a room that was all monastically white—his tongue was so dry that he was unable to moisten his lips with it. He lay perfectly still, gazing at Peter’s silver collar that, taken

off for the night, hung from the hook on the back of the white door. His lips muttered fragments of words with which his mind had nothing to do. They bubbled up from within him as if from the depths of his soul, and at that moment Robert Grimshaw knew himself. He was revealed to himself for the first time by words over which he had no control. In this agony and this prickly sweat the traditions—traditions that are so infectious—of his English public-school training, of his all-smooth and suppressed contacts in English social life, all the easy amenities and all the facile sense of honour that is adapted only to the life of no strain, of no passions ; all these habits were gone at this touch of torture. And it was of this intolerably long anguish that he had been thinking when he had said to Etta Stackpole that in actual truth he was only a Dago. For Robert Grimshaw, if he was a man of many knowledges, was a man of no experiences at all, since his connection with Katya Lascarides, her refusal of him, her shudderings at him, had been so out of the ordinary nature of things that he couldn't make any generalizations from them at all.

When he had practically forced Dudley Leicester upon Pauline, he really had believed that you can marry a woman you love to your best friend without enduring all the tortures of jealousy. This sort of marriage of convenience that it was, was, he knew, the sort of thing that in their sort of life was frequent and successful enough, and having been trained in the English code of manners never to express any emotion at all, he had forgotten that he possessed emotions. Now he was up against it.

He was frightfully up against it. Till now, at least, he had been able to imagine that Dudley Leicester had at least a devouring passion for, a quenchless thirst to protect, his wife. It had been a passion so great and commencing so early that Grimshaw could claim really only half the credit of having made the match. Indeed, his efforts had been limited to such influence as he had been able to bring to bear upon Pauline's mother, to rather long conversations in which he had pointed out how precarious, Mrs. Lucas being dead, would be Pauline's lot in life. And he had told her at last that he himself was irretrievably pledged,

both by honour and by passion, to Katya Lascarides. It was on the subsequent day that Pauline had accepted her dogged adorer.

His passion for Katya Lascarides! He hadn't till that moment had any doubt about it. But by then he knew it was gone; it was dead, and in place of a passion he felt only remorse. And his longing to be perpetually with Pauline Leicester—as he had told Ellida Langham—to watch her going through all her life with her perpetual tender smile, dancing, as it were, a gentle and infantile measure; this, too, he couldn't doubt. Acute waves of emotion went through him at the thought of her—waves of emotion so acute that they communicated themselves to his physical being, so that it was as if the thought of Katya Lascarides stabbed his heart, whilst the thought of Pauline Leicester made his hands toss beneath the sheets. For, looking at the matter formally, and, as he thought, dispassionately, it had seemed to him that his plain duty was to wait for Katya Lascarides, and to give Pauline as good a time as he could. That Pauline would have this with Dudley Leicester he hadn't had till the

moment of the meeting in Regent Street the ghost of a doubt, but now . . .

He said: "Good God!" for he was thinking that only the Deity—if even He—could achieve the impossible, could undo what was done, could let him watch over Pauline, which was the extent of the possession of her that he thought he desired, and wait for Katya, which also was, perhaps, all that he had ever desired to do. The intolerable hours ticked on. The light shone down on him beside the bed. At the foot Peter slept, coiled up and motionless. At the head the telephone instrument, like a gleaming metal flower, with its nickel corolla and black bell, shone with reflected light. He was accustomed on mornings when he felt he needed a rest to talk to his friends from time to time, and suddenly his whole body stirred in bed. The whites of his eyes gleamed below the dark irises, his white teeth showed, and as he clasped the instrument to him he appeared, as it were, a Shylock who clutched to his breast his knife and demanded of the universe his right to the peace of mind that knowledge at least was to give him.

He must know; if he was to defend

Pauline, to watch over her, to brood over her, to protect her, he must know what was going on. This passionate desire swept over him like a flood. There remained nothing else in the world. He rang up the hotel which, tall, white, and cold, rises close by where he had seen Etta Stackpole spring from the cab. He rang up several houses known to him, and, finally, with a sort of panic in his eyes he asked for Lady Hudson's number. The little dog, aroused by his motions and his voice, leapt on to the bed, and pattering up, gazed wistfully at his face. He reached out his tongue to afford what consolation he could to the master, whom he knew to be perturbed, grieved, and in need of consolation, and just before the tinny sound of a voice reached Grimshaw's ears Grimshaw said, his lips close to the mouthpiece, "Get down." And when, after he had uttered the words, "Isn't that Dudley Leicester speaking?" there was the click of the instrument being rung off, Robert Grimshaw said to himself grimly, "At any rate, they'll know who it was that rung them up."

But Dudley Leicester hadn't known; he was too stupid, and the tinny sound of the

instrument had destroyed the resemblance of any human voice.

Thus, sitting before Pauline Leicester in her drawing-room, did Robert Grimshaw review his impressions. And, looking back on the whole affair, it seemed to present himself to him in those terms of strong light, of the unreal sound of voices on the telephone, and of pain, of unceasing pain that had never "let up" at any rate from the moment when, having come up from the country with Katya's kisses still upon his lips, he had found Pauline in his dining-room, and had heard that Dudley Leicester didn't know.

He remained seated, staring, brooding at the carpet just before Pauline's feet, and suddenly she said: "Oh, Robert, what did you *do* it for?"

He rose up suddenly and stood over her, and when he held both her small hands between his own, "You'd better," he said—"it 'll be better for both you and me—put upon it the construction that shows the deepest concern for you."

And suddenly from behind their backs came the voice of Katya Lascarides.

"Well," she said, "Robert knows everything. Who is the man that rang up 4,259 Mayfair?"

Robert Grimshaw hung his head for a moment, and then :

"I did," he said.

Katya only answered, "Ah!" Then, very slowly, she came over and put one hand on Pauline's shoulder. "Oh, you poor dear," she exclaimed, and then to Robert: "Then you'd better come and tell him so. I'll stake my new hat to my professional reputation that it'll put him on to his legs at once."

And with an air of taking him finally under her wing, she conducted him down the passage to Dudley Leicester's room.

In the dining-room Pauline stood for a long time looking down at her fingers that rested upon the tablecloth. The air was full of little noises—the clitter of milk-cans, the monotonous sound of water pulsing continuously from the mains, the voices of two nurses as they wheeled their charges home from the

Park. The door-bell rang, but no one disturbed her. With the light falling on her hair, absolutely motionless, she looked down at her fingers on the white cloth and smiled faintly.

II

IN the long, dark room where Dudley Leicester still sprawled in his deep chair, Katya stopped Robert Grimshaw near the door.

"I'll ask him to ask you his question," she said, "and you'll answer it in as loud a voice as you can. That 'll cure him. You'll see. I don't suppose you expected to see me here."

"I didn't expect it," he answered, "but I know why you have come."

"Well," she said, "if he isn't cured, you'll be hanging round him for ever."

"Yes, I suppose I shall be hanging round him for ever," he answered.

"And more than that, you'll be worrying yourself to death over it. I can't bear you to worry, Toto," she said. She paused for a long minute and then she scrutinized him closely.

"So it was you who rang him up on the telephone?" she said. "I thought it was, from the beginning."

"Oh, don't let's talk about that any more," Grimshaw said; "I'm very tired; I'm very lonely. I've discovered that there are things one can't do—that I'm not the man I thought I was. It's you who are strong and get what you want, and I'm only a meddler who muddles and spoils. That's the moral of the whole thing. Take me on your own terms and make what you can of me. I am too lonely to go on alone any more. I've come to give myself up. I went down to Brighton to give myself up to you on condition that you cured Dudley Leicester. Now I just do it without any conditions whatever."

She looked at him a little ironically, a little tenderly.

"Oh, well, my dear," she said, "we'll talk about that when he's cured. Now come."

She made him stand just before Leicester's sprawled-out feet, and going round behind the chair, resting her hands already on Leicester's hair in preparation for bending

down to make, near his ear, the suggestion that he should put his question, she looked up at Robert Grimshaw.

“You consent,” she said, with hardly a touch of triumph in her voice, “that I should live with you as my mother lived with my father?” And at Robert Grimshaw’s minute gesture of assent: “Oh, well, my dear,” she continued quite gently, “it’s obvious to me that you’re more than touched by this little Pauline of ours. I don’t say that I resent it. I don’t suggest that it makes you care for me any less than you should or did, but I’m sure, perfectly sure, of the fact such as it is, and I’m sure, still more sure, that she cares extremely for you. So that . . .” She had been looking down at Dudley Leicester’s forehead, but she looked up again into Robert Grimshaw’s eyes. “I think, my dear,” she said slowly, “as a precaution, I think you cannot have me on those terms; I think you had better”—she paused for the fraction of a minute—“marry me,” and her fingers began to work slowly upon Dudley Leicester’s brows. There was the least flush upon her cheeks,

the least smile round the corners of her lips, she heaved the ghost of a sigh.

“So that you get me both ways,” Robert Grimshaw said ; and his hands fell desolately open at his side.

“Every way and altogether,” she answered.

EPISTOLARY EPILOGUE



EPISTOLARY EPILOGUE

“It was a summer evening four years later when, upon the sands of one of our most fashionable watering-places, a happy family group, consisting of a buxom mother and several charming children, might have been observed to disport itself. Who can this charming matron be, and who these lovely children, designated respectively Robert, Dudley, Katya, and Ellida ?

“And who is this tall and robust gentleman who, wearing across the chest of his white cricketing flannel the broad blue ribbon of His Majesty’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, bearing in one hand negligently the *Times* of the day before yesterday and in the other a pastoral rake, approaches from the hayfields, and, with an indulgent smile, surveys the happy group ? Taking from his mouth his pipe—for in the *dolce far niente* of his summer vacation, when

not called upon by his duties near the Sovereign at Windsor, he permits himself the relaxation of the soothing weed—he remarks :

“ ‘ The Opposition fellows have lost the by-election at Camber.’ ”

“ Oblivious of his pipe, the charming matron casts herself upon his neck, whilst the children dance round him with cries of congratulation, and the trim nurses stand holding buckets and spades with expressions of respectful happiness upon their countenances. Who can this be ? ”

“ And who, again, are these two approaching along the sands with happy and contented faces—the gentleman erect, olive-skinned, and, since his wife has persuaded him to go clean-shaven, appearing ten years younger than when we last saw him ; the lady dark and tall, with the first signs of matronly plumpness just appearing upon her *svelte* form ? They approach and hold out their hands to the happy Cabinet Minister with attitudes respectively of manly and ladylike congratulation, whilst little Robert and little Katya, uttering joyful cries of ‘ Godmama ’ and ‘ Godpapa ! ’ dive into their pockets for chocolates and the

other presents that they are accustomed to find there.

“Who can these be? Our friend the reader will have already guessed. And so, with a moisture at the contemplation of so much happiness bedewing our eyes, we lay down the pen, pack up the marionettes into their box, ring down the curtain, and return to our happy homes, where the wives of our bosoms await us. That we may meet again, dear reader, is the humble and pious wish of your attached friend, the writer of these pages.”

Thus, my dear —, you would have me end this book, after I have taken an infinite trouble to end it otherwise. No doubt, also, you would have me record how Etta Hudson, as would be inevitably the case with such a character, eventually became converted to Roman Catholicism, and ended her days under the direction of a fanatical confessor in the practice of acts of the most severe piety and mortification. Jervis, the butler of Mr. Dudley Leicester, you would like to be told, remained a humble and attached dependent in the service of his master; whilst Saunders, Mr.

nothing to say. You go to books to be taken out of yourself, I to be shown where I stand. For me, as for you, a book must have a beginning and an end. But whereas for you the end is something arbitrarily final, such as the ring of wedding-bells, a funeral service, or the taking of a public-house, for me—since to me a novel is the history of an “affair”—finality is only found at what seems to me to be the end of that “affair.” There is in life nothing final. So that even “affairs” never really have an end as far as the lives of the actors are concerned. Thus, although Dudley Leicester was, as I have tried to indicate, cured almost immediately by the methods of Katya Lascarides, it would be absurd to imagine that the effects of his short breakdown would not influence the whole of his after-life. These effects may have been to make him more conscientious, more tender, more dogged, less self-centred; may have been to accentuate him in a great number of directions. For no force is ever lost, and the ripple raised by a stone, striking upon the bank of a pool, goes on communicating its force for ever and ever throughout space and throughout

eternity. But for our vision its particular "affair" ends when, striking the bank, it disappears. So for me the "affair" of Dudley Leicester's madness ended at the moment when Katya Lascarides laid her hands upon his temple. In the next moment he would be sane, the ripple of madness would have disappeared from the pond of his life. To have gone on farther would have been, not to have ended this book, but to have begun another, which—the fates being good—I hope to write. I shall profit, without doubt, by your companionship, instruction, and great experience. You have called me again and again an Impressionist, and this I have been called so often that I suppose it must be the fact. Not that I know what an Impressionist is. Personally, I use as few words as I may to get any given effect, to render any given conversation. You, I presume, do the same. You don't, I mean, purposely put in more words than you need—more words, that is to say, than seem to you to satisfy your desire for expression. You would probably render a conversation thus :

"Extending her hand, which was enveloped in creamy tulle, Mrs. Sincue exclaimed, 'Have

another cup of tea, dear?' 'Thanks—two lumps,' her visitor rejoined. 'So I hear Colonel Hapgood has eloped with his wife's French maid!'

I should probably set it down :

"After a little desultory conversation, Mrs. Sincue's visitor, dropping his dark eyes to the ground, uttered in a voice that betrayed neither exultation nor grief, 'Poor old Hapgood's cut it with Nanette. Don't you remember Nanette, who wore an apron with lace all round it and those pocket things, and curled hair?'"

This latter rendering, I suppose, is more vague in places, and in other places more accentuated, but I don't see how it is more impressionist. It is perfectly true you complain of me that I have not made it plain with whom Mr. Robert Grimshaw was really in love, or that when he resigned himself to the clutches of Katya Lascarides, whom personally I extremely dislike, an amiable but meddlesome and inwardly conceited fool was, pathetically or even tragically, reaping the harvest of his folly. I omitted to add these comments, because I think that for a writer to intrude himself between his characters and his

reader is to destroy to that extent all the illusion of his work. But when I found that yourself and all the moderately quick-minded, moderately sane persons who had read the book in its original form failed entirely to appreciate what to me has appeared as plain as a pikestaff—namely, that Mr. Grimshaw was extremely in love with Pauline Leicester, and that, in the first place, by marrying her to Dudley Leicester, and, in the second place, by succumbing to a disagreeable personality, he was committing the final folly of this particular affair—when I realized that these things were not plain, I hastened to add those passages of explicit conversation, those droppings of the eyelids and tragic motions of the hands, that you have since been good enough to say have made the book.

Heaven knows, one tries enormously hard to be simple, to be even transparently simple, but one falls so lamentably between two stools. Thus, another reader, whom I had believed to be a person of some intellect, has insisted to me that in calling this story "A Call" I must have had in my mind something mysterious, something mystical; but what I meant was

that Mr. Robert Grimshaw, putting the ear-piece to his ear and the mouthpiece to his mouth, exclaimed, after the decent interval that so late at night the gentleman in charge of the exchange needs for awaking from slumber and grunting something intelligible—Mr. Grimshaw exclaimed, “Give me 4259 Mayfair.” This might mean that Lady Hudson was a subscriber to the Post Office telephone system, but it does not mean in the least that Mr. Grimshaw felt religious stirrings within him or “A Call” to do something heroic and chivalrous, such as aiding women to obtain the vote.

So that between those two classes of readers—the one who insist upon reading into two words the whole psychology of moral revivalism, and the others who, without gaining even a glimpse of meaning, will read or skip through fifty or sixty thousand words, each one of which is carefully selected to help on a singularly plain tale—between these two classes of readers your poor Impressionist falls lamentably enough to the ground. He sought to point no moral. His soul would have recoiled within him at the thought of adorning by one single superfluous word his plain tale. His

sole ambition was to render a little episode—a small “affair” affecting a little circle of people—exactly as it would have happened. He desired neither to comment nor to explain. Yet here, commenting and explaining, he takes his humble leave, having packed the marionettes into the case, having pulled the curtain down, and wiping from his troubled eyes the sensitive drops of emotion. This may appear to be an end, but it isn't. He is, still, your Impressionist, thinking what the devil—what the *very* devil—he shall do to make his next story plain to the most mediocre intelligence !

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